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MEMOIRS  
OF THE  
LIFE AND WORKS  
OF  
SIR JOHN SINCLAIR, BART.

EDINBURGH : PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE AND CO., PAUL'S WORK.

MEMOIRS  
OF THE  
LIFE AND WORKS  
OF THE LATE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
SIR JOHN SINCLAIR, BART.

BY HIS SON,  
THE REV. JOHN SINCLAIR, M. A.

PEME. COLL. OXFORD, F. R. S. E.

AUTHOR OF DISSERTATIONS VINDICATING THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND ;

AN ESSAY ON CHURCH PATRONAGE, &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS, EDINBURGH.  
T. CADELL, STRAND, LONDON.

MDCCCXXXVII.



TO  
THE HIGHLAND AND AGRICULTURAL  
SOCIETY OF SCOTLAND  
THIS MEMOIR OF THE LIFE AND WORKS  
OF THE  
FOUNDER OF THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE  
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY  
THE AUTHOR.



## PREFACE.

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My father, previous to his last illness, frequently expressed a wish, that after his decease I should publish a Memoir of his life and literary undertakings. The task thus imposed upon me was laborious as well as delicate. Notwithstanding his habitual love of order and arrangement, his voluminous papers, the accumulation of above sixty years, amounting, as he sometimes calculated, to forty or fifty thousand, had, from various causes, fallen into confusion. The subjects to be treated of were miscellaneous, and most of them quite alien to my usual studies and professional engagements. In order to explain fully his connexion with different events and individuals, I found it necessary to go over the history and parliamentary proceedings of more than half a century, as well as to investigate the details of Agriculture and Finance—the two leading subjects to which his attention was directed.

Nor was the delicacy inferior to the laboriousness of the work. My relation to the subject of the Memoir necessarily furnished me with facts, to which a stranger could have no access, but did not permit the exercise of that freedom with which a neutral person is allowed to treat the sentiments and conduct of the dead. While, however, filial duty obliged me to commence the task, I was encouraged in the prosecution of it, by reflecting that the biography of an individual, who had occupied so large a space for many years in the eye of the public, and who had been deeply engaged in so many departments of political and social usefulness, could only fail of interesting a large portion of readers from great deficiencies in the execution.

Where such a multiplicity of disputed topics fell of necessity under discussion, entire coincidence of opinion could scarcely be anticipated between the person described and his biographer. My aim has been to keep myself as much as possible out of view, and to bring forward my father's own arguments and views. As my sentiments on various subjects are already before the public, and remain unchanged, I have been under less necessity of interposing explanations as to the degree in which, on particular questions, our opinions differed or concurred.



In the most important parts of this work, my materials were ample, even to superfluity; not so for other portions, and especially for the period of my father's early life. Few companions of his youth are now alive, and the reminiscences of these few are vague and scanty. Perhaps it is not always true of old men that they remember with the vividness ascribed to them the events of youth. A small number of particulars, and those often the most trivial, generally include all the reminiscences of an aged mind.

In the selection of my materials I encountered considerable difficulty. Some of them referred to facts of no present importance—some to political events so obscurely hinted in the papers before me, or so entirely overlooked by contemporary historians and annalists, as to defy all explanation. Justice in many cases to the departed, and in many more to the living, forbade the publication of papers intrinsically important, but guarded by the seal of confidential secrecy. The question, how far an historian or biographer may avail himself of assistance from private letters and memoranda intrusted to him, is one to be approached with tenderness and caution. In communicating with their friends men think aloud. To decide, therefore, upon the publication of thoughts thus freely imparted, involves a serious, and often

painful responsibility. The subject has been judiciously discussed by Lord Hailes. Remarking on Mr Servan's able Thesis on the impropriety of publishing Posthumous Pieces or Letters written in confidence, Lord Hailes writes thus to Dr Erskine :—  
“ If I received a letter from a person which contains things hurtful to the character of that person, or things which he would not wish to have made public, I should suppress them, unless obedience to the commands of the law, or a sense of duty to society obliged me to reveal them. But that the same rule is to take place for ever, and after I and my correspondents are in our graves, is, I think, to carry matters too far. Suppose that to be the rule, and apply it to past times, and see how history would be darkened. For example, without such letters, how little would be known of the history of the last century ? To give one instance out of a hundred, what would have been known of the character and conduct of M. de Maintenon without such publications ? And yet that is necessary for the knowledge of forty years of the reign of Louis XIV. Without such publications we cannot have a just notion of the virtues and vices of eminent persons ; but we must take them just as we find them, in panegyrics and satires published in their own time.”\*

\* Moncreiff's Life of Erskine, p. 358, &c.

In the completion of this work, I found nothing more arduous than to reduce so many unconnected subjects to a clear and natural arrangement. Where an individual has been deeply immersed in political and literary pursuits of various kinds, and where his private history has but little bearing upon his public life, it must often be a perplexing consideration whether unity of subject, or chronological order shall have the preference. I have endeavoured as much as possible to preserve both. In three cases, however, unity of subject appeared to me so important as to justify a departure from chronology : I allude to the chapters on the Statistical Account of Scotland ; on the Board of Agriculture ; and on the improvements in Caithness, my father's native county.

Traits of generosity and public spirit, such as those recorded in this work, ought to call forth from any narrator expressions of approbation. But in the room of eulogies from myself, which my relation to the deceased would lead the reader to regard as words of course, I have substituted encomiums supplied by more disinterested as well as more competent judges. The praise so often and so liberally bestowed upon the public services of Sir John Sinclair was not dictated by party zeal : he belonged to no party ; and has therefore bequeathed his reputation, not to the

jealous watchfulness of a few political associates, but to the unbiassed collective judgment of his countrymen.

Although, as I have said, the task of writing these pages devolved upon me by my father's own desire, I long hoped that he would fix upon a biographer possessed of more leisure and of better information; besides, that I felt invincible reluctance to anticipate, by formal or busy preparation for his Memoirs, an event so melancholy as the death of a venerated parent. Thus, I lost the benefit of his own explanations as to particular facts and opinions necessarily entering into the work. But if I have made this sacrifice to feelings in which my readers naturally will sympathize, I have endeavoured to atone for the omission, by the most careful research among his papers, and by the most ample enquiries among his literary and political friends.

I shall only add, that I had great satisfaction in supplying some of the materials for a short account of my father's life, in a series of contributions to the Quarterly Journal of Agriculture. The Memoir, in that valuable periodical, is from the pen of D. M. Moir, Esq. of Musselburgh; and is written with his usual ability, good feeling, and research.

# CONTENTS OF VOLUME I.

---

## CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
GENEALOGY—Lady Janet Sinclair—Education at Edinburgh—At Glasgow—At Oxford—For the Scotch Bar—For the English Bar—First Tour on the Continent—First Marriage—Thurso Castle—Observations on the Sabbath—Dr Adam Smith—Observations on the Scottish Dialect—Dr Johnson, . . . . .	1

## CHAPTER II.

Entrance on Public Life—State of Parties—Speech on the Dutch War—Naval Tracts—St Alban's Club—Mr President Laurens—Change of Ministers—Lord North—Rockingham Administration—Scarcity in Scotland—Highland Dress—Reform in Parliament—Shelburne Administration—Pamphlet on Gibraltar—Coalition—Pamphlets on Finance—Pitt Administration—Westminster Scrutiny—History of the Revenue—Death of Mrs Sinclair—Second Visit to the Continent—Bishop Watson—Baronetcy, . . . .	53
---	----

## CHAPTER III.

Remarks on Travelling—Denmark—Count Bernstorff—Professor Thorkelin—Sweden—Gustavus—Russia—Empress Catherine—Princess Daschkow—Grand Duke Paul—Moscow—Count Romanzoff—Poland—Stanislaus—Tepper the Banker—Austria—Emperor Joseph—Prussia—Frederic William—Prince Henry—Mirabeau—Hanover—Duke of York—Holland—French Intrigues—Flanders—George III.—Lord Chancellor Thurlow—Presidents Washington and Jefferson, . . . . .	132
--	-----

## CHAPTER IV.

Second Marriage—Macdonald Family—Bosvilliana—Habits of Life —Useful Suggestions—Differences with Mr Pitt—Warren Has- tings—Neutral Party—African Association—Regency Question— Slave Trade—British Wool Society—Cheviot Sheep, . . .	180
---	-----

## CHAPTER V.

French Revolution—Meetings at Mr Windham's—Exchequer Bills —Plan of licensing Bankers—Origin of the Board of Agriculture —Arthur Young—First Battalion of Fencibles—Second Batta- lion—Captain Fraser—Marquess Cornwallis—Lord Moira—Ex- chequer Bills for the Colonies—Loyalty Loan—Thoughts on Peace—Suspension of Cash Payments—Lord Moira—Duke of Northumberland—Lord Malmesbury's Negotiations—Letter to Lord Thurlow—Neutral Party—Income Tax—Scotch Repre- sentation—Addington Administration—M. Otto—American Cor- respondence, . . . . .	228
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# MEMOIRS

OF THE LATE RIGHT HONOURABLE

SIR JOHN SINCLAIR, BART.

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## CHAPTER I.

Genealogy—Lady Janet Sinclair—Education at Edinburgh—At Glasgow—At Oxford—For the Scotch Bar—For the English Bar—First Tour on the Continent—First Marriage—Thurso Castle—Observations on the Sabbath—Dr Adam Smith—Observations on the Scottish Dialect—Dr Johnson.

SIR JOHN SINCLAIR was born at Thurso Castle, in the county of Caithness, on the 10th of May, 1754. The surname of *Sinclair*, *St Clare*, or *de Sancto Claro*, is of Norman origin. One of the villages in Normandy, still bearing the name, must have originally given its territorial appellation to its feudal proprietor. David I., or St David, founder of so many monasteries in Scotland as to be pointedly designated by his less pious successor, James I., “a sair saint

for the Crown," introduced many Norman settlers into Scotland, and granted the manor of Roslin, near Edinburgh, to William de Sancto Claro, early in the twelfth century. From him descended Sir William, who, having married one of the daughters and co-heiresses of Malise, Earl of Strathern, Caithness and Orkney, brought the last of these titles into his family. His son consequently was acknowledged Earl of Orkney in 1379, by Haco, King of Norway, and also by Robert II. the earliest Scottish king of the Stuart line. To the third Earl of Orkney (grandson of the above, chancellor of Scotland, and builder of the chapel at Roslin, that rich specimen of our Gothic architecture) was granted, in 1455, the earldom of Caithness, as the compensation for a claim, through his mother, to the lordship of Nithsdale. The family of Sinclair, thus established in Caithness, was not long afterwards deprived arbitrarily by James III. of the earldom of Orkney, but retained that of Caithness, which became thenceforth their chief title.

William, Earl of Caithness, notwithstanding his loss of the earldom of Orkney, continued still so powerful, that, from his three sons, branched three eminent families—those of the Lords Sinclair, the Earls of Caithness, and the Sinclairs of Roslin. The family of the Lords Sinclair appears to have been for some time extinct in the male line. The title, however, by a singular arrangement, was conveyed to a



family of the same name, but bearing different arms, and not distinctly traceable to the same stock.

But to proceed at once to the immediate ancestors of the subject of this Memoir :—George, fifth Earl of Caithness, conveyed, in 1596 and 1603, the lands of Ulbster to Patrick Sinclair, whom, in both grants, he designates his cousin. Dying without issue, Patrick was succeeded by his brother John, styled Master (*Magister*), a title of honour peculiar in those times to professional scholars. To this learned gentleman the same earl renews the former grants, “ for the particular love and favour that he bears towards his cousin, Master John Sinclair of Ulbster.” \* This charter was confirmed by the Crown in 1616.

To trace the genealogy of the Ulbster family from this remote period is unnecessary, and would be tedious. I may, however, mention, that alliances for several generations were formed by them with the most respectable families in the north of Scotland, and additions made successively to their patrimonial estates. Among the most distinguished were John Sinclair of Brims, who served during the Thirty Years’ War in the Swedish army ; and Sir George

\* In the history of the Drummond family, collected by the first Viscount Strathallan in 1681, there is the following entry regarding Mr John’s first wife :—“ Jean Cheesholm, daughter of Alexander Cheesholm, person of Comrie, was married to Mr John Sinclair, laird of Ulbster in Catnes, a neare kinsman to the Earle of Cathness. She did beare to him Patrick Sinclair, who succeeded,” &c.

Sinclair of Clyth, who represented the county of Caithness in the Scottish Parliament for many years previous to the Union—a measure which he decidedly opposed. Before, however, the terms of it were finally arranged, he died, leaving no issue.\* A singular illustration of strong feudal prejudice is afforded in two instances by the Ulbster family. In both cases, two brothers of different generations, holding separate properties, settled them, by mutual agreement, upon each other. And, in the latter of these cases, the surviving brother, actuated by this feudal spirit, entailed his whole estate upon his cousin, the heir-male, passing over the families of no less than seven sisters, all of whom were honourably connected by marriage.

John Sinclair of Ulbster, grandfather to the subject of these Memoirs, purchased, in 1719, the greater portion of the estates constituting the earldom of Caithness. His descendants, in consequence of this purchase, became hereditary sheriffs and chamberlains of the county.† By a singular contract with the inhabitants of Wick, he acquired the hereditary superiority of that burgh, empowering him to choose the magistrates from a list annually presented to him.

\* Although the name of Sir George occurs in various deeds of his time, his rank, whether that of knight or baronet, is not specified except in one document, where it is remarkable that both titles are given him.

† On the abolition of heritable jurisdictions in Scotland, his son claimed the sum of L.5000.

In 1714, he married Henrietta Brodie, sister to the Lord Lyon of Scotland. By her he had five children, of whom George, the eldest, succeeded him in 1736.

George Sinclair of Ulbster, father to the venerated individual whose history I am about to give, was educated in England. He studied for some time at a private academy kept by the celebrated Dr Watts at Newington, near London. He completed his education at Utrecht; and, while resident at the University, received intelligence of the death of his father, and his consequent accession to the family estates.\*

\* On that occasion, the letter of advice written to him by his venerable instructor was no less worthy of Dr Watts, than honourable to his pupil:—

“ Newington, near London,

“ Oct. 13, 1736.

“ SIR,

“ It was by Mr C. I was informed that, while you were pursuing your studies at Utrecht, the Providence of God had deprived you of a father, and, by giving into your hands so considerable an estate, had made you entirely governor of yourself, and of all your affairs. It was also from the same hand I was informed and received a particular account of those Christian virtues that were blooming in your youthful years; of your serious and religious temper and spirit; of your diligence and delight in learning for the improvement of your mind; of the growing and joyful hopes which your friends have conceived of you. Those tidings gave a gladness to my heart, while in many families of the gentry both in North and South Britain we see nothing but woful degeneracy from the piety and virtue of their ancestors. Now, can you take it

Having completed his education at a foreign university, according to a custom not unfrequent among Scotsmen in those times, the young laird of Ulbster made a tour on the continent, in company with the

ill of me, sir, who have the honour of a little acquaintance with you, to endeavour to encourage your pious resolutions, and confirm your love of religion and goodness? Perhaps there are some of your acquaintances, who are themselves vain and sensual, who impute all your virtues to your minority, and your being under restraint and government. Now is your time, sir, to assume courage for God's sake, and make it appear, to their great mortification, that your religion is not owing to any prejudices of your childhood, nor to any providential restraints; but that the seeds of piety are sown deep in your heart, and have taken deep root there; that, upon the manly principles of rational conviction and judgment, you dare profess yourself a Christian, and maintain that profession with zeal and steadiness of soul, and with a holy uniformity in the conduct of your life.

“ The temptations within us, and without us, are many. The powers of appetite and passion in younger years are generally strong and violent. The multitude of evil counsellors and evil companions that may court your acquaintance in your present circumstances, will all unite their forces to divert your heart from God, and ruin your eternal hopes. Dear sir, let the advice of your blessed Saviour ever dwell with you; ‘ watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.’ Maintain an awful sense of the eye of God upon your heart, and all your ways, and be ever jealous of such company as give a loose to their inclinations in the pursuit of forbidden pleasures.

“ In the early part of life we are apt to be too sensibly impressed with the ridicule of the world. We are afraid and ashamed to run counter to the fashions of the age, be they ever so vicious. May the grace of God defend your heart with genuine courage, and guard you against all such weakness.

Earl of Sandwich (afterwards first Lord of the Admiralty), Lord President Dundas, and other distinguished characters of that day. Returning to Scotland he married Lady Janet Sutherland, daughter of William Lord Strathnaver, who, had he outlived his father, would have been seventeenth Earl of Sutherland. By this marriage Mr Sinclair had twelve children, of whom only five survived him, namely,—John, my late father; James, who entered the army, but died young, and three daughters.\*

Mr Sinclair retained the sentiments of consistent piety, the seeds of which in early life had been implanted by Dr Watts. His conduct with respect to public as well as private exercises of devotion was more exemplary than I fear can be recorded of many

May the books of the New Testament, the Psalms of David, and the wise Proverbs of Solomon his son, be the rules of your conduct, the assistants of your devotion, and the life of your spirit. May the providence of God guide and determine all your affairs for you. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy steps; Prov. iii. 6. I shall always be glad to hear of your advancement in wisdom and happiness. May your present behaviour in the world make it appear that youth and piety are no strangers to each other, and in your following years of life, may you be an ornament to our religion, and an honour to your native country. Grace and peace be with you.—I am, sir, your faithful and humble servant,

“ISAAC WATTS.”

\* Of these, Helen was married to Colonel Alexander Campbell, of Barcaldine; Mary, to James Home Rigg, of Morton, Esq.; and Janet, to the Hon. Lord Polkemmet, one of the Senators of the College of Justice in Scotland.

in his rank of life at that time. He lived on terms of friendly intercourse with Dr Blair, Principal Robertson, and other cotemporaries of high literary eminence. A form of prayer found among his papers after his decease shows, that from some latent symptoms of disease, he anticipated sudden death, and made it a subject of daily petition "to be always on his watch-tower, that when God was pleased to call him, he might be ready to answer." The event happened as he foreboded. On the morning of August 29, 1770, he was found lying on the floor of his apartment in a fit of apoplexy, which carried him off within two days.

The guardians of his young family appointed by the will of the deceased, were Lord Auchinleck (father of James Boswell the biographer), the Hon. General Mackay, and Sir Adam Fergusson, Bart. But he well estimated the worth of his highly gifted widow, by leaving them chiefly to her charge. Providentially for them the piety of Lady Janet, her energy and sagacity, and her talents even for those details of business usually regarded as the exclusive province of the other sex, enabled her to discharge with vigour and efficiency her arduous office. A large estate was committed to her superintendence: it was ill cultivated, minutely subdivided, and burdened with heavy debts. But the resources of her mind were equal to the difficulties of her situation. She knew the value of every farm on the estate, together with

the character and the circumstances of every tenant. She was even a match for that shrewdness of which the world has generally ascribed so liberal a portion to northern minds.

As many peculiarities in the disposition and habits of my father may be traced to the guardianship of Lady Janet, I may be permitted to introduce one or two traditionary anecdotes, illustrative of her character and times. Her circumstances, as we have seen, required the exercise of rigid economy, but in her this virtue was no impediment to Christian beneficence. She was beloved while she was revered by her people, who felt that her benefactions were not extorted by their importunity, but dictated by her own good sense and kindly feeling. An amusing misappropriation of her alms was occasionally related to her friends by Lady Janet herself. While residing in the Canon-gate, a well-known resort of respectable Dowagers in former days, she was one morning importuned by a pedlar to purchase a handsome dress. She admired the article, but rejected it as too expensive. Shortly afterwards a note from her friend Lady —— requested of her the loan, or more properly the gift, of a sum of money for some pressing emergency. My good-natured grandmother complied with the request, but what was her surprise, and perhaps mortification, to see her friend next day attired and promenading in the very dress, about which she had herself, only the day before, exercised so much laudable self-denial.

I have already mentioned the popularity of Lady Janet with her dependents. Their confidence in her regard for them was not misplaced. On some points, especially of matrimony, it extended to a degree which we might pronounce divertingly eccentric. She was sensitively anxious that each of her female domestics should find a suitable husband and protector. On one occasion during a serious illness, being under some alarm for her own life, she gave her maid some salutary parting advice; and, among other admonitions, pressed upon her the necessity of being married. The young woman, no doubt astonished at the introduction of such a subject, confessed that she had already entered into an engagement of the kind, but was prevented from completing it by a "little hindrance." "And what is that?" said her mistress. "Only just, my Leddy, that the man is married already, and his wife is not dead yet, but they tell me she is dying." Lady Janet was satisfied, and expressed the comfort she had received from this interesting communication.

Notwithstanding eccentricities of this kind, which, I may observe, had generally a benevolent tendency, some idea of the respect which this really superior woman inspired among her northern neighbours, may be gathered from another story which she sometimes related. She happened to be directress of an assembly given at Edinburgh, while the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland held their session. A simple-



mind ed gentleman in the north, no doubt as little conversant with ecclesiastical affairs as with the nature of the fashionable meeting over which her Ladyship was to preside, addressed a letter of business to "The Right Hon. Lady Janet Sinclair, Moderator of the General Assembly, Canongate, Edinburgh."

This simple correspondent did not mistake in supposing that her Ladyship took real interest in the welfare of the Scottish establishment, and the efficiency of its ministers. The autograph is now before me of her letter to a young clergyman, Mr Nicholson, whom her son had recently appointed to the parochial charge of Thurso. It is characterised by a deep sense of the responsibilities belonging both to patron and incumbent.\*

\* *Lady Janet Sinclair to the Rev. P. Nicholson.*

"SIR,

"The letter I enclose you from my son will fully explain his intention of bestowing on you the church of Thurso. I pray to Almighty God that you may be enabled to discharge the important duties of a minister of Christ faithfully, as one that must give an account of the precious souls committed to you. Be diligent in the discharge of your duty, circumspect in your conduct, that your precepts may be supported by your example, and both uniting may occasion a reform of practice in the parish, which is much wanted. I cannot omit recommending it as a duty incumbent on you regularly to catechise the town of Thurso, and all the English and Irish inhabitants of the parish. Your youth and inexperience suggest to me these hints to be necessary; and I look upon the choice of a patron as in some measure rendering him answerable for consequences. God forbid he should have cause to repent his making choice of you;

Lady Janet attained nearly her seventieth year, and had the happiness to see her son rise to distinction as an author and a statesman. Her last letter, written to him in the immediate prospect of death, manifests at once the high endowments of her understanding, and the amiable qualities of her heart. I may insert it here, to prevent any future interruption of the narrative.

*Lady Janet Sinclair to John Sinclair, Esq.*

“ 9th June, 1783.

“ MY DEAR SON,

“ Before this can be delivered to you, I shall have bid a final adieu to this vain world, to all its concerns, and all my connexions in it. The death of an affectionate parent will naturally affect a son of your sensibility. I earnestly pray Almighty God to grant his choicest blessings on you, my dear son, your amiable wife, and promising children. May you always endeavour to serve God faithfully, and to worship him with reverence : may religion and virtue be the rule of all your actions ; and suffer not the temptations or allurements of a vain world to make you swerve from your duty.

“ My settlement, of date 1776, which will accompany the contrary, I hope you will exert yourself to promote the cause of religion, and follow the precepts of your great master, at whose awful tribunal you and I must make our account.

“ 1st November, 1785.”

pany this, will give a striking proof of my attachment to you and yours. May the blessing of God accompany it. Your sisters I recommend to your affectionate attention. I hope they will merit it. Mrs Campbell has a large family, which she will find it difficult to educate and provide for. Mrs Rigg is, happily, married to a good husband, and is in great affluence. My dear Jessy is happy under your and Mrs Sinclair's protection. I hope you will be a father to them all.

“ As to your own concerns, I entreat you to observe economy, and beware of impositions. Reside as much in Caithness as possible, and do not trust too much to the management of others in the conducting of your affairs. You'll find few to trust. Self-interest with some, popularity with others, you'll have to encounter. Even my long experience was not proof against their arts. Keep short accounts with those you employ in every capacity, and do as much of your own business and affairs as possible yourself.

“ I don't approve of setting large tacks \* to tacksmen. They often oppress the poor people under them.

“ To be in debt is a most disagreeable situation to be placed in. To contract it is easy, but how very difficult to repay! It lessens one's importance,

\* Farms.

chagrins the temper, and ruins a family. Beware of cautionary, and engagements for others.

“ I have had a variety of trials and afflictions in life, with malice unprovoked, disrespect, and indifference. These I did not merit or resent, and I now forgive.

“ Adieu, my dearest son, till we meet in another world, as I trust, in the mercy of God, and through the merits of an all-sufficient Saviour, that we shall meet in a state of bliss and endless happiness, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest. May you and yours be happy. God bless all my dear children, prays your affectionate mother,

“ JANET SINCLAIR.”

The subject of these Memoirs received his elementary education at Edinburgh. It was a custom at that time for the Magistrates to examine publicly the reading-schools of the city in the public concert-room, afterwards St Mary's Chapel, at the foot of Niddry Wynd. Each scholar, according to his abilities, recited some striking passage in prose or verse. My father, at six years of age, made his appearance before this civic auditory. The late Countess of Kelly, above half a century afterwards, had a vivid recollection of him pouring forth from the orchestra the philippic of Adherbal addressed to the Roman Senate against Jugurtha, and accom-

plishing his task with such vigour and animation as to draw from the good-natured assembly a decided opinion that the young orator would become in time "a great man." He was afterwards sent to the High School, which has been the nursery of many eminent characters. He soon rose to be the head of Mr Farquhar's class, but was afterwards removed to Caithness, where his father had resolved to reside for some time. It was while his parents were preparing for this journey northwards that the Reverend Mr Logan, on the recommendation of Dr Blair, was chosen for his private tutor. The speech and manners of this delightful poet and eminent divine were not so polished as his diction. Lady Janet was apprehensive that her son might catch, in some degree, the rusticity and uncouthness of his talented preceptor, and stated to Dr Blair her anxiety to place her son in other hands. The accomplished professor of rhetoric, however, took a different view of the matter. "Your Ladyship," said he, "in selecting a tutor for your son, should prefer a scholar to a dancing-master."

While the family were on this northern journey an event occurred which illustrates the facetiousness of Logan. The Laird of Ulbster, as his party was numerous, and the roads through Sutherland and the adjoining counties were in those days almost impassable, was obliged to employ two carriages, the heaviest of them drawn by six horses. When the

cavalcade reached Kinross, the natives gathered round in crowds to gaze upon it, and requested the tutor to inform them who was travelling in such state. Logan affected a suspicious reluctance to give an answer, but at last took aside some respectable bystander, and, after enjoining secrecy, whispered to him, pointing to the Laird, " You observe a portly, stout gentleman, with gold lace upon his clothes? that is (but it must not be mentioned to mortal) the great Duke William of Cumberland; he is going north *incog.* to see the field of Culloden once more." This news was, of course, spread, and brought the whole population to catch a glimpse of the hero.

On the return of my father from Caithness to Edinburgh, in the following year, he was again placed in Mr Farquhar's class at the High School, where his endeavours to resume his former station were painfully unsuccessful—a disappointment which, in after life, he often quoted as a proof that private education, even under the ablest tutor, must yield to the advantages of a public school.

The subsequent embarrassments of poor Logan afford a powerful example of that improvidence too often the fatal attendant on genius. I am glad to find, from my father's papers, that he took an early, and, I trust, a beneficial interest in the fortunes of his gifted tutor. The sermons of Logan, now so popular, were published originally by subscription, in aid of which the exertions of his pupil were unre-

mitting. He solicited his political friends, then high in office, to purchase divinity, which perhaps they never read, and obtained a promise from Warren Hastings to provide for the author's nearest relatives.\*

Mr Sinclair entered the University of Edinburgh at the early age of thirteen. That distinguished seminary was then in the zenith of its scientific and literary fame. At the head of the College was Robertson the historian; Moral Philosophy was taught by Ferguson, Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres by Blair, Mathematics by Matthew Stewart (the father of Dugald, the great metaphysician), Medicine by Cullen and Gregory. The young student first attended the lectures of Professor George Stuart, teacher of the Latin, or, as it is styled in Scottish Universities, the *Humanity* class. The Professor was much pleased with the early talent and proficiency of his pupil, and lived to congratulate him on their full development in after life. A letter written towards the close of the last century, congratulates Sir John Sinclair on his "various and manly efforts for the real interest

\* The history of criticism has preserved to us nothing more curious than the judgment of eminent men on the works of their cotemporaries. The following passage in a letter from Dr Blair to my father has an air of condescending patronage towards a writer whom some may regard as equal, some as superior to the Professor himself:—"The sermons," he says, alluding to Logan's publication, "I hope will turn to account, and they are likely, I think, to be popular and acceptable."  
—26th December, 1789.

and honour of his country ;” adding, that, “ while others were pursuing selfish interests or empty trifles, he was employed on labours which would transmit his name with honour to posterity.”

In addition to his classical studies, my father, while he remained at Edinburgh, attended lectures in logic, natural philosophy, and rhetoric. As an assistance to the students of rhetoric in the formation of a correct style, Dr Blair used to make them analyse critically the compositions of some standard writer. He chose for this purpose, the “ Spectators” of Addison, as among the most perfect models of English diction. When the Professor approved of the remarks offered to him in this way, it was his custom to introduce them into a lecture which he delivered to the class in the course of the Session. Upon reading over this lecture in the doctor’s printed works, my father was amused and gratified to find several of his own juvenile criticisms.

After four years of study at Edinburgh, Mr Sinclair removed to Glasgow, chiefly that he might attend the lectures of John Millar, Professor of civil law in that city. This professorship had in former times been almost a sinecure. The occupant of the chair had lectured in Latin, and of course to empty benches. Four students were looked upon as a numerous class. Mr Millar’s predecessor had abolished this antiquated usage, and Millar himself adopted further methods to render his lectures attractive. The instructions of



this eminent jurist were ever after acknowledged by Mr Sinclair with gratitude, and a huge quarto volume on the pandects, remains an evidence of his industry and application. His residence in a great commercial city gave opportunities of learning, both from personal observation, and from intercourse with intelligent merchants, the details of commerce ; a species of acquirement which is rarely found united with University education, and which proved highly useful to him in parliamentary life.

During his residence at Glasgow, my father made his first literary efforts. An anonymous writer, signing himself Mercator Caledonius, had written letters in the Caledonian Mercury, lamenting the hard usage endured by the Highland tenantry from their landlords, in being forced, by exorbitant rents, to abandon their native country, and emigrate to the wilds of America. My father, then in his sixteenth year, conceived that this author aspersed the Highland proprietors unjustly, and resolved to answer him, adopting for that purpose the signature of Julius Cæsar. These juvenile productions excited some attention at the time ; and it naturally gratified the author to hear them in conversation made the subject of frequent remark.

His attendance on the lectures of Professor Millar was preparatory to admission into the Faculty of Advocates ; and at the close of the Professor's course, he returned to Edinburgh for the completion of his

juridical acquirements. It was the practice very generally at that time for gentlemen altogether independent of professional emolument, to study for the Scottish bar, in order to become acquainted with legal forms, and thus enabled to take a share in the business of their respective counties. Other students also who had no expectation of practice, became members of the faculty, in the hope of an appointment eventually to some of the numerous and respectable offices to which the gown is a necessary passport. To acquire readiness in speaking, the young civilians had long formed themselves into debating clubs, where essays were read, and questions of all kinds, both political and literary, submitted to free discussion. Many of the orators, statesmen, and philosophers most renowned in modern British history have been trained in these rhetorical gymnasia. I need only write the names of Stewart, Mackintosh, Horner, Russell, Jeffrey, Lansdowne, and Brougham. In 1772, Mr Sinclair became a member of the select and speculative societies, having men for his cotemporaries most of whom have now passed away, while the few who have survived retain scarcely a reminiscence of the parties once supported or assailed by them with all the fire of youthful rivalry. No plan of study could be more laborious than that which Mr Sinclair adopted previous to his examination for the bar. That his reading might be free from all interruption, he took lodgings at Dalkeith, a small town six miles from

Edinburgh, where he made the following arrangement of his time:—

Sleep,	.	.	.	7	hours.
Dressing,	.	.	.	0 $\frac{1}{2}$	..
Meals and relaxation,	.	.	.	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	..
Exercise,	.	.	.	2	..
Study,	.	.	.	12	..
					<hr/>
					24

The valuable treatise on Scotch law, by Erskine, the Blackstone of Scotland, was my father's great authority. The first edition of that work was an octavo, the second, much enlarged, a folio. Mr Sinclair had his octavo edition interleaved, and filled up the blank pages with all the additional matter from the folio. The success of his studies was commensurate with his energy and perseverance. He accumulated so large a fund of professional knowledge, that, when he passed the usual preliminary ordeal, his examiners all concurred in anticipating success to him at the bar. One in particular, struck with the correct and ready answers of the young candidate, exclaimed, "I believe you know more of the subject than any one of us."

It was while Mr Sinclair was carrying on his study of the law that the death of his father, as I have already mentioned, put him in possession of his family estate. Aged friends and relatives, whose natural sa-

gacity had been quickened by long acquaintance with the world, now interposed a copious supply of those moral commonplaces and shrewd maxims of worldly policy, with which young heirs are usually assailed by guardians and seniors. Curious specimens of this kind of hortatory composition are now before me. A fearful list is there drawn up before the eye of the youthful laird of "wily lawyers," "crafty usurers," "dashing gamesters," and "young ladies just come out," seconded by "mothers, aunts, cronies, and cousins," all united in conspiracy against him.

From this period Mr Sinclair continued to improve his opportunities of instruction at Edinburgh, but regularly spent his summers in Caithness, where, with great spirit, he commenced agricultural improvements, particularly on the farm adjoining the family mansion. "The public road," he says in his private memoranda, "went diagonally across my finest fields, and I was anxious to make it straight, that they might be properly cultivated. This alteration, however, could not be effected without the consent of the neighbouring proprietors, which, owing to ancient feuds, as well as recent jealousies, my mother assured me I had not the smallest prospect of obtaining; but I resolved on making the attempt, and invited them all to Thurso Castle to show them my proposed line, and solicit their consent to its adoption. They came accordingly, and to Lady Janet's utter amazement, at once agreed unanimously to my proposal. This cir-

cumstance gave me an early impression of the happy influence exerted by attention and civility."

This success led to an experiment in road making on a larger scale. Mr Sinclair used every exertion to enforce in his neighbourhood the statute labour of six days in the year on the roads. This resource provided by law being considered utterly inadequate to any satisfactory result, had never been tried. One great bugbear was the hill of Ben Cheilt, in the centre of Caithness, over which it was imagined that the whole statute labour of the country could not make a road. The question was often asked incredulously of the young proprietor, "When, with all your improvements, will you show us a road over Ben Cheilt?" To conquer this implied impossibility, my father, at the age of eighteen, resolved to make a great exertion. He examined the ground in person, caused the whole to be lined out, fixed a day of meeting, and assembled all the neighbouring farmers, with their servants, to the number of 1260. To each division of this multitude was assigned a separate spot, where they found tools and provisions. They began to work at dawn of day, and continued their labours until a road, which had been hardly passable for horses in the morning, became practicable for carriages before night. Some English strangers happening to be present, were heard to declare that they had never witnessed a more gratifying scene.

One more occasion may be mentioned, when Mr

Sinclair showed the rising energy of his character. His ancestors, as I have already mentioned, had acquired the right of superiority over the burgh of Wick, the county town : and in virtue of that right, he possessed a veto on the election of the provost and baillies. Considering the minority of their superior a favourable opportunity for an invasion of his rights, certain malecontents in the burgh and neighbourhood had recourse to intimidation, offering various insults to himself and his adherents. These outbreakings of local violence were met by proper firmness on the part of the young proprietor. He resolved that no concession should be wrung from him by threats ; he sent a special summons to his own tenantry and those of his surrounding friends ; and assembling an array of 1200 persons, overawed the disaffected burghers so completely, that they abandoned their design of interrupting the election. From this affair Mr Sinclair received a lesson which he never afterwards forgot. “ One of the leaders in these disturbances,” he says in his private memoranda, “ informed me that he was exasperated to oppose me by my neglect in not answering a letter. I was thence induced never to fall again into the same error.”

In November 1774, Mr Sinclair entered at Lincoln’s Inn, and occasionally kept terms till the year 1782, when he was called to the English bar. Anxious, mean while, to complete his education for public life, and rightly judging that at an English University

there was more likelihood of forming acquaintance with the future actors in the political drama, he matriculated as a gentleman commoner at Trinity College, on the 26th of January, 1775. He at first resided in his College; but afterwards took lodgings at the house of Mr Ireland, a respectable medical practitioner, originally from Stirling, in North Britain. The good-humoured facetiousness, and strong national attachments of this gentleman, made him a general favourite at the University; especially among the Scottish gownsmen, to whose hilarity on St Andrew's day, he was for upwards of half a century a large contributor. He may possibly be still well known to the youngest Oxonians, who may observe him to this very day in the same well-powdered queue, the same golden-headed cane, the same light-brown single-breasted coat, with lace ruffles at the wrists, the same light-coloured silk stockings, and the same knee breeches with silver buckles, in which, on a visit, more than half a century ago to his native country, he was represented by Dighton in the well-known caricature of "Ireland in Scotland."

Of my father's academical associates, little can be ascertained at this distant period, especially as his residence at Oxford was not of long duration. There were two under-graduates, however, of his time, with both of whom he formed a friendship of many years continuance, namely, Mr North, eldest son of the

prime minister, and Viscount Maitland (now Earl of Lauderdale).

Having completed a laborious and diversified education, Mr Sinclair proposed to enlarge his knowledge by foreign travel. For the present, however, the plan was interrupted by a matrimonial negotiation. During a short residence at Stoke Newington, near London, he became attached to Sarah, daughter of Alexander Maitland, Esq., a gentleman of Scotch extraction. As this young lady was heiress to a considerable fortune, and had been carefully educated, the candidates for her hand were numerous; and the young laird of Ulbster, notwithstanding a handsome person and accomplished manners, had less prospect of success from the remoteness of his paternal domains, situated as they were in those recesses of the north, which English prejudice once placed beyond the pale of comfort, refinement, and civilisation. A curious circumstance determined the contest in his favour. One of his rivals had taken an excursion to the Highlands, and, after proceeding as far as Inverness, was recalled unexpectedly to England. On his return, he explained to the ladies at Stoke Newington his disappointment at having been unable to complete his tour. He had heard, he said, of a young gentleman in Caithness, named Sinclair, who appeared to be an extraordinary character; and was carrying on improvements in that country with an energy never before heard of. Twelve hundred men had



been assembled in one day, to make a road over a hill which had been looked upon as impassable, and plans for introducing commerce and manufactures, and for advancing agriculture, were in daily progress under the auspices of this hyperborean improver. This encomium proved unfortunate for the good-natured eulogist. His competitor rose, at his expense, in the young lady's estimation. Mr Sinclair's proposal was accepted, the marriage-contract drawn up, and nothing more required than to name the day ; but Mrs Maitland felt insuperable repugnance to the removal of her daughter from her own neighbourhood, and insisted on a promise from her future son-in-law, that he would reside permanently in England. To this condition, public spirit withheld him from consenting; and as he now considered the engagement broken off, he resumed his plan of an excursion to the Continent.

In this short tour he was accompanied by his younger brother James, a lieutenant in the army, who was in bad health, and for whose recovery a residence in a southern climate had been prescribed. To this his first journey on the Continent, little reference occurs either in my father's papers, or printed works. In a letter to Lady Janet on his way through Calais, the germ may be found of that zeal for the culture of waste lands, which afterwards ripened into such extensive usefulness throughout his life. " The commons we passed through in Kent," he says, " are neither agreeable to the eye, nor of use to the people

they belong to. I could not help regretting that the English law, beautiful as it is in many other particulars, should be so averse to the division of this dormant property, as to deprive the present generation of all hopes to see a great part of their country under cultivation." From Calais, the brothers proceeded to Paris, and from thence to Dijon. The natural character of the peasantry, gay, frank, and good-humoured, added much to the pleasure of the journey. This harmless joviality was a very different kind of feeling from that frantic merriment which must now be inseparably associated in the minds of my readers with the horrors of the revolution. At a small village in Burgundy, the lieutenant observing some grotesque figures at the inn, burst into immoderate laughter, in which his brother loudly joined him. A Burgundian bystander, instead of resenting the mirth enjoyed at the expense of his countrymen, exclaimed, with some point and great pleasantry; "J'aime cette jolie musique." It will be in the recollection of my father's friends, that when any ludicrous incident or observation called forth a peal of laughter, he seldom failed to repeat the saying of his Burgundian friend; "J'aime cette jolie musique."

The travellers, on arriving at Avignon, dined at the *table d'hôte*, where Mr Sinclair found himself seated next a grave gentleman in a Spanish cloak, by whom, after some conversation in French, he was surprised to find himself addressed in a broad Scotch

accent. Mutual felicitations naturally ensued, and attracted the notice of the French gentleman presiding, who, being informed that it was an unforeseen rencontre of Scotsmen, requested silence, and addressing Mr Sinclair, said :—" We rejoice, sir, to hear that you and your companion are Scotsmen. On the expulsion of the Stuarts, a number of their partisans settled in this town and neighbourhood, where they have left descendants, much esteemed, and proud of their extraction. We are delighted in the opportunity of showing attention to the natives of your country. They will always find a cordial welcome at Avignon." He then gave from the chair the toast — " Success to Scotland, and the Scottish people."

From Avignon our tourists proceeded to Aix in Provence, where the climate proved colder than in Scotland at the same season. In this district, to which they had resorted for its warm temperature, Mr Sinclair met with an accident hardly ever heard of in his own country. He was so severely frost-bitten that he suffered long after from the effects of it. But a far greater affliction arose from the rigour of the climate—his brother's complaints at this place were so much aggravated as to cause death.

On his return from this short excursion, Mr Sinclair learnt, with equal surprise and satisfaction, that Miss Maitland did not approve, as he had supposed, of the arbitrary stipulation made by her mother. He

intimated his readiness to renew his addresses, a favourable answer was returned, and the marriage solemnized on the 26th March, 1776.

Mr and Mrs Sinclair, after their marriage, retired to the family mansion at Thurso, an old castellated building, erected by George, sixth Earl of Caithness. This singular edifice stands upon a rock so close to the Pentland Frith that the spray from the sea in stormy weather passes over the roof.\* By some whimsical perverseness in the architect, or a want of taste in the noble founder, almost all the windows at that time faced a court-yard surrounded with high walls, being turned aside, in contempt, as it should seem, of the magnificent marine views which would have formed the best apology for the choice of situation. The garden was five miles distant from the house, and, from the badness of the road, was nearly inaccessible. Not a tree nor hedge-row appeared in all the neighbourhood, and the enclosures were divided only by dykes or walls of rough stone. The

\* Lord Byron, who was a schoolfellow at Harrow of the present Sir George Sinclair, intending to visit him at Thurso Castle, stipulated that there should be good fish, and a rubber at whist. Sir George might have promised that, had the lameness of the poet been even greater than it was, he might have procured his favourite delicacy with his own hands, as fish have been caught with a rod from the drawingroom window. Byron's marriage, unfortunately for Caithness, prevented the visit. The bold coast scenery, and wild traditions of this remote district would probably have elicited some splendid scintillations of his romantic genius.

soil was rich, considering the barren aspect of the scene, but Mr Sinclair took less pride in the fecundity of the land than of the water. He used to mention, with great triumph, that on one occasion he presented some southern visitors with twenty-four kinds of fish, and that the fishermen regretted having had but one day's notice, otherwise they would have supplied a greater quantity, declaring that forty different species might be collected in the neighbouring rivers, lakes, and bays. In the river Thurso, salmon are so abundant, that in a memorable instance two thousand five hundred and sixty were caught in a single net.\*

\* *On the celebrated draught of salmon in the river Thurso.* —“ In the preceding Statistical Account, chap. ii. sect. 1, mention was made of the celebrated draught of salmon in the river of Thurso, when no less a number than 2560 were caught. That circumstance has been often mentioned, but seemed incredible to many who were not acquainted with the circumstances attending that event. With a view of having the fact ascertained, the following certificate was given by three persons who witnessed the transaction, and are of unquestioned veracity.

“ ‘ We, George Paterson, now bailie of Thurso, George Swanson, shoemaker there, and Donald Finlayson, senior, fisher there, do hereby certify and declare, That upon the 23d day of July, old style, we think in the year 1743 or 1744, there were caught, at one haul, in the cruive pool, upon the water above the town of Thurso, *two thousand five hundred and sixty salmon*. These fish were caught by a large net, beginning the sweep at the cruives, and coming down the stream to a stem at the low end of the pool. The net was carried down the water by from eighteen to twenty men, with long poles in their hands keeping down the ground rope, and the fish were

The finest object in the vicinity of Thurso is an isolated rock called the Clett, far exceeding in grandeur Shakspeare's celebrated cliff at Dover. It rises perpendicularly to a stupendous height out of the deep, within a few yards of Holborn-head—a bold promontory opposite the castle; and is the undisturbed retreat of innumerable sea-fowl.

Not far from the Castle stands Harold's Tower, a modern building, erected by Mr Sinclair, both for the sake of ornament to the country and of utility as a sea mark. The idea of this building was first suggested to my father by an eccentric antiquary, Alexander Pope, minister of Reay. This old gentleman had witnessed with horror the sacrilegious spoliation of an ancient chapel, the burying-place of Harold, Earl of Caithness, who had fallen in battle fighting against Norwegian invaders. The minister presented a petition in the name of the fallen chief, craving protection for his remains, and animadverting on the negligence which had allowed his mausoleum to be

afterwards taken ashore by degrees in a smaller net. Each man got a fish and some whisky for his trouble. We farther certify and declare that we were personally present when these fish were caught.

‘ GEORGE PATERSON.

GEORGE SWANSON.

his

DONALD D. + F. FINLAYSON,  
mark.

“ ‘ Thurso, 23d August 1792.’ ”

—*Statistical Account of Scotland*, vol. xx.

pulled to pieces, and its fragments profanely built into enclosures for the surrounding fields.\*

In the old castle we have been describing, Mr Sinclair kept up the system of feudal hospitality. Every gentleman of the county, and every stranger, found a welcome at his table, though sometimes it was alleged, after his appearance in political life, that sufficient discrimination was not observed between the reception given to friends and foes. A freeholder in the

\* The following is the curious document referred to :—

“ Know, sir, that I was slain in battle about the year 1190, near your park of Kirkwall, which has its denomination from an elegant chapel built above my grave in the said park. The stones of my chapel are now carried away, and built in your enclosures about that ground. I had once a right to the half of Orkney and Zetland from the King of Norway, and a right to the half of Caithness from King William, the Lyon of Scotland. I had also an estate in Sutherland, where I was born. I lost my life in battle, endeavouring to recover my property, as became a nobleman of spirit, out of the hands of a cruel and daring tyrant, justly called Wicked Earle Harolde; who died ingloriously thereafter, being hanged by order of King William the Lyon, who marched into Caithness at the head of a gallant army, to chastise that daring and bloody tyrant, in the year 1196.

“ Be pleased to enclose my grave in a decent manner, so as not to become the resting-place of animals, or to have my remains ploughed up. My grave is now all my estate, which ought to be held inviolable. By so doing, you will show a noble example to others, to honour the memory of the brave, though unfortunate; you make restitution, as the stones of my chapel are built in your enclosures; you give a caution to others not to violate the sepulchre of the dead; and it will yield you the most manly and sensible pleasure, to have done an action, commendable in itself, and which will perpetuate your memory to posterity.”

opposite interest has been known, in return for hospitable treatment, to rise from his board and vote against him.

During his stay in Caithness at this time, Mr Sinclair employed himself in literary and theological investigations. Among the subjects which occupied his attention, was the authority of the Christian Sabbath. Doubts had occurred to him whether the Sabbathical institution was not a part of the ceremonial law, terminating with the Jewish polity. Some texts in the writings of St Paul, which abrogate the Jewish Sabbath, augmented his anxiety on the subject. He proceeded to collect authorities on this point to the extent of forty or fifty volumes, including many scarce and curious treatises. He arranged his ideas in the form of a tract, entitled "Observations on the Christian Sabbath." He had no idea of weakening the obligation of Christians to attend public worship on the first day of the week ; but he conceived that, after public worship had been attended, other useful employments not strictly religious might be pursued without infringing the Divine law.

The works which fell under the notice of my father on this most important subject belonged, unfortunately, to that lax school of theologians, who, dreading Puritanism even more than profaneness, were unable to preserve the happy medium of Christian moderation and sobriety ; and whose unworthy patronage of King James's book of "Sports and Pastimes" exas-



perated those austere and gloomy tempers which it was designed to subdue. Some excuse, at the same time, for these latitudinarian writers may be found in their disgust at the absurdities maintained by injudicious defenders of the Puritan cause. Heylyn enumerates some "monstrous paradoxes," as he justly terms them, which had been maintained from the pulpit by several of those austere and blinded casuists. "First," says he, "it was preached at a market-town in Oxfordshire, that to do any service-work or business on the Lord's Day was as great a sin as to kill a man, or commit adultery. Secondly, preached in Somersetshire, that, to throw a bowl on the Lord's Day, was as great a sin as to kill a man. Thirdly, in Norfolk, that, to make a feast or dress a wedding dinner on the Lord's Day, was as great a sin as for a father to take a knife and cut his child's throat. Fourthly, in Suffolk, that to ring more bells than one on the Lord's Day, was as great a sin as to commit murder. —I add," continues Heylyn, "what I once heard myself at Serjeant's Inn in Fleet Street, that temporal death was at this day to be inflicted by the law of God on the Sabbath-breaker; on him that, on the Lord's Day, did the works of his daily calling, with a grave application unto my masters of the law; that if they did their ordinary works on the Sabbath day, in taking fees and giving counsel, they should consider what they did deserve by the law of God." \*

\* Hist. of the Sabbath; Heylyn's Works, p. 490.

In the introduction to his work, Mr Sinclair renounces all authority but that of reason enlightened by Scripture, and guards against the imputation of scepticism or indifference, to which the boldness of his speculations might expose him, by declaring that he “gloried in the name of Christian, and would by no means forfeit so noble an appellation.”

Having completed his lucubrations in a large neatly written quarto manuscript, he, on his return to Edinburgh, submitted them to the revision of his friend Dr Adam Smith. The judgment given on this occasion is memorable, as proceeding from a layman, a profound and independent thinker, and the well-known apologist of David Hume. “Your work is very ably written; but I advise you not to publish it; for, rest assured that the Sabbath, as a political institution, is of inestimable value, independently of its claims to Divine authority.” On this opinion, Mr Sinclair did not hesitate to act. His work was put aside, and the labour of many months sacrificed without scruple, to his regard for the interests of society. It were earnestly to be wished that divines, high in ecclesiastical station, were possessed of the prudence and tender consideration for the public welfare so benevolently exemplified in this instance by the author of the *Wealth of Nations*.

The taste for economical inquiries imbibed in early life by my father, was confirmed by intercourse with Dr Adam Smith, whose acquaintance he had fre-

quent opportunities of cultivating. A few casual reminiscences of the Doctor may here be introduced, which I believe have not hitherto been printed.

Towards the close of the American war, when general despondency seemed to paralyse the nation, Dr Smith, confident in the resources of the country, would not allow himself to despair of the commonwealth. On the news of Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga, Mr Sinclair hurried to his friend with intelligence of the disaster, insisting that, if affairs went on no better, the nation must be ruined.—“Be assured, my young friend,” replied the imperturbable philosopher, “there is a great deal of ruin in a nation.” Burgoyne, though a weak and unfortunate commander, was an elegant scholar and a plausible reasoner. My father used to say of him, that he was a general “better able to apologize for a defeat than to gain a victory.”

In cases of moral sentiment the worthy Doctor was not so imperturbable. He disliked nothing more than that moral apathy—that obtuseness of moral perception which prevents a man from not only seeing clearly, but feeling strongly, the broad distinction between virtue and vice, and which, under the pretext of liberality, is all-indulgent even to the blackest crimes. At some party where Mr ———, in his mawkish way, was finding palliations for some villanous transaction, the doctor waited in patient silence till he was gone, and then exclaimed, “Now, I

can breathe more freely ; I cannot bear that man ; he has no *indignation* in him."

In Adam Smith there was a large share of that simplicity which so often characterises genius. Dining one day at Dalkeith Palace with his pupil the Duke of Buccleuch, he met, amongst other guests, two sons of Lord Dorchester, who, being merely young men of fashion, were considered by the doctor as unfairly monopolizing the attention both of the noble host and of his company. The conversation seemed to turn entirely upon Lord Dorchester's family, Lord Dorchester's estates, Lord Dorchester's equipage, &c. At length the doctor, turning to the person next him, enquired, in a sufficiently audible whisper, " Pray, who is Lord Dorchester ? I never heard so much of him before."

Most of my readers who have visited Edinburgh must have seen, on the Calton Hill, the monument which the Historian of England chose to erect during his own lifetime in honour of himself, with the brief but pointed inscription, " David Hume." Walking along the North Bridge with Lord Dunmore, Adam Smith pointed with his cane towards the Hill, exclaiming, " I don't like that monument ; it is the greatest piece of vanity I ever saw in my friend Hume."

Among various communications from Dr Smith to my father, I must not omit to notice a holograph letter in six folio pages, commenting on a financial

work which the latter intended to publish, but which has since been lost, or merged in other publications. This document is curious, as few letters in the doctor's own hand are extant. His remarks derive their chief value and significance from their connexion with the manuscript on which they form a commentary. The conclusion of the letter gives some general and interesting maxims on the subject of taxation:—"I dislike all taxes that may affect the necessary expenses of the poor. They, according to different circumstances, either oppress the people immediately subject to them, or are repaid with great interest by the rich; that is, by their employers, in the advanced wages of their labour. Taxes on the *luxuries* of the poor, upon their beer and other spirituous liquors for example, as long as they are so moderate as not to give much temptation to smuggling, I am so far from disapproving, that I look upon them as the best of sumptuary laws.

"I could write a volume upon the folly and the bad effects of all the legal encouragements that have been given either to the linen manufacture or to the fisheries.—I have the honour to be, with most sincere regard, my dear friend, most affectionately yours,

"ADAM SMITH."

Various circumstances have brought suspicion on the religious principles of Dr Adam Smith. His in-

timacy with Hume was not only greater than ordinary courtesy, Christian charity, or literary friendship required; but was of that fraternal character which seemed to intimate coincidence of opinion and identity of sentiment. In the second edition of his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, he omitted, on the suggestion, as is supposed, of his sceptical friend, a splendid passage, referred to by Archbishop Magee as among the ablest illustrations of the doctrine of Atonement. In the suspicion thus excited, my father did not participate. He was anxious to think favourably of a venerated friend. Smith himself justified the omission alluded to, not on the ground that the doctrine of Atonement was unfounded, but that the paragraph was unnecessary and misplaced. It is an interesting fact in relation to the religious sentiments of this great philosopher, that when his mother, to whom he always evinced an amiable attachment, was on her deathbed receiving pastoral visits from the minister of her church, her son was regularly present, devoutly joining in prayers offered through the mediation of his Redeemer. Had this pious lady suspected her son of infidelity, such a practice must have given her any thing but satisfaction. Hume, under the same circumstances, could not with decency have attended. Prostrate on his knees, by the bedside of his dying parent, in deprecation of the wrath of God, the author of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* would surely feel the sentiment

revive which he himself had once so forcibly given to the public, but had afterwards so suspiciously recalled; and “rejecting repentance, sorrow, humiliation, contrition, as inadequate, he would confess that some other intercession, some other sacrifice, some other atonement, must be made for man, beyond what he himself is capable of making, before the purity of the Divine justice can be reconciled to his manifold offences.” \*

Shortly before his death, Dr Adam Smith had occasion, under very interesting circumstances, to take leave of his literary friends. Among his favourite places of resort was the Oyster Club—a convivial society, of which Dr Hutton, Dr Black, Dr Adam Ferguson, John Clerk, the naval tactician, Robert Adam, the architect, as well as our philosopher himself, and other eminent characters, were original members. They were nearly of the same age; they had most of them been educated together; and their chief enjoyment consisted in relating the adventures and reviving the associations of their youth. Their rendezvous was at a stabler’s (a second-rate inn) in the Grassmarket; but as the Club became better known, and the numerous candidates for admission became clamorous and troublesome, the place of meeting was often changed with a view to secrecy. The last meetings of the club, which did not long survive the doctor, were chiefly at a small hostelry in the Cow-

\* Abp. Magee on the Atonement, vol. i. p. 210.

gate. Strangers of celebrity were sure to be introduced; so that the members had the advantage of seeing all the distinguished men who came to Scotland at that period. Among the noted persons added to the Society were Dugald Stewart, Professor Playfair, Sir James Hall, and Lord Daer. For some time before his death, Dr Smith, although he could still enjoy the society of his friends at home, was unable to attend the Oyster Club. One day finding himself somewhat better, he requested that the meeting should be held at Panmure House, his own residence in the Canongate. During supper, when he appeared tolerably well, and when his spirits were enlivened by the conversation of his old associates, one or two others, comparatively strangers, joined the circle, anxious to be present, from the idea that this was probably the last occasion on which the doctor would appear. The interruption seemed to agitate him; it pained him to be an object of curiosity; he was unable, in his state of weakness, to recover himself. At last, rising from his seat, he walked towards the door, where he stood for a few moments, and then addressed the company with affectionate plainness:—"My friends, I fear that I must leave this happy meeting, and that I shall never meet you again; but I trust that we shall all meet hereafter in another and a better world."

In expectation of his death, the doctor, who, like many other eminent men in the same state, was ap-



prehensive of injudicious publication by his surviving friends, caused a great number of manuscripts to be burnt; and, among others, all his lectures on jurisprudence, and a complete course of belles lettres, the latter of which had been particularly admired. It is much to be regretted that he did not live to prepare these works for the press; since he is frequently accused of being more anxious for the material than for the moral and intellectual wealth of nations.

Before proceeding to my father's political life, I may notice two literary works of his previous to the year 1783. One was an historical essay on Addison, in which, without entering into an elaborate criticism on the productions of that accomplished writer, he relates, with a degree of vivacity and even playfulness not in general characteristic of his style, a variety of entertaining anecdotes, both of Addison himself and his co-temporaries. This essay, though not published, was printed and circulated among his friends.

The other work of Mr Sinclair was entitled, "Observations on the Scottish Dialect." He perceived with much regret the inconvenience and disadvantages to which his countrymen, however eminent as speakers and writers, were exposed, when their accent and phraseology came under English cognizance. Even the polished dictum of Hume and Robertson had on this account been subjected occasionally to censure. Tried at the bar of southern criticism, they had been found guilty of *national* barbarisms. A pro-

vincial barbarism is a very obvious and intelligible expression, meaning a word or phrase confined to some narrow district : but that the peculiar phraseology of a whole nation should be condemned as barbarous, could only have arisen from the peculiar situation of Scotland ever since the period of King James' accession to the English throne. "If the two nations," says Dr Robertson, "had continued distinct, each might have retained idioms and forms of speech peculiar to itself; these being rendered fashionable by the example of a court, and supported by the authority of writers of reputation, might have been considered in the same light with the varieties occasioned by the different dialects in the Greek tongue, might have been considered as beauties, and in many cases might have been used promiscuously by the authors of both nations. But by the accession, the English naturally became the sole judges and lawgivers in language, and rejected as solecisms every form of speech to which their ear was not accustomed." \*

Among the first persons who suggested the idea of collecting the peculiarities of the Scottish dialect into a volume, was the great lexicographer of England, who, notwithstanding his Anglican prejudices, did not wish the language of Scotland to fall into oblivion. "He advised me," says Boswell, "to complete a dictionary of words peculiar to Scotland, of which I showed him a specimen." "Sir," said he, "Ray has made

\* Hist. of Scotland, book 8.

a collection of north country words ; by collecting those of your country, you will do a useful thing towards the history of the language." Boswell's work was never completed ; but Hume annexed a collection of Scotticisms to the first edition of his political discourses ;\* Beattie also and Elphinstone published some remarks on the Scottish dialect. These, however, were inadequate guides to Scotsmen in avoiding peculiarities of speech and writing unintelligible or offensive to English ears.

Mr Sinclair, therefore, for his own improvement, and as a help to his countrymen in attaining purity of expression, undertook the labour of collecting the most remarkable words and phrases by which the natives of North Britain usually provoked the censure of their southern neighbours. His object extended certainly beyond that of ordinary grammarians ; for he conceived that by assimilation of language, the familiar intercourse of the Scots and English would be essentially facilitated—national jealousies would die away—and political union be followed by a complete social fusion of the two nations.†

\* Hume had so carefully studied the subject, that he became an accurate censor of compositions by his countrymen. After perusing Dr Reid's enquiry into the human mind, he informs the author, apparently with surprise, that he had detected but one solitary Scotticism in the work, namely, "hindered to do," instead of the more classical expression, "hindered from doing."

† On this performance a foreign critic remarks :—"The subject of the work is philological, but its object political ; for

In the Introduction to his work the author discusses at some length the origin of the Scottish dialect, showing how the ancient Celtic came to be superseded by the Saxon tongue in the southern and eastern counties of Scotland. Under four heads he treats of phrases exclusively Scotch, and of words peculiar to Scotsmen, or employed by Scotsmen in senses different from the English, including verbs, adjectives, nouns, and particles. Under his third head he descends to the minutæ of peculiar idioms connected with entertainments, games, dress, towns, houses, furniture, trades, and occupations. Lastly, he discusses professional phraseology, whether of the law or of the church. While engaged in examining the diversities of expression at the Scotch and English bar, he suggests the utility of consolidating the laws of both countries, quoting for this purpose the authority of Lord Bacon, who, among his political papers, recommends the compilation of a British code of jurisprudence. It is here that my father makes his first allusion to the advantage of codification, a subject which afterwards engrossed so large a portion of his life.

In conclusion, he pointedly remarks on the bar-

it was an attempt to approximate the conversational language of the Scots and English, so that the two nations might be more closely united." See Baron Varnhagen Von Ense in the Berlin Critical Review, June 1831.

barisms of England, which were provincial, and not national, and which, he observes, were quite as numerous as those he had collected in respect to Scotland. He warns his countrymen in particular against the solecisms of which the capital itself exhibited such multiplied and gross examples.

Mr Sinclair's work was much approved by cotemporary critics, as a "useful and ingenious performance, containing the largest collection of Scotticisms that had till then been offered to the public."\* Elphinstone, also, with amusing naïveté and self-complacency, makes the following acknowledgments in his preface to a work on the principles of the English language. "If, upon the whole, the present analogist have executed, in any tolerable degree, his important purpose, the public has to ascribe any benefit thence arising, primarily and ultimately to John Sinclair of Ulbster, Esq., whose ingenuity in the lately published 'Observations on the Scottish dialect,' has been exceeded only by the modesty that made him devolve the prosecution of the patriotic task on the hand which first grasped *the standard* of English analogy, and promulged to London the principles of her speech."

As many of my readers on the other side of the Tweed may not have had opportunities of hearing Scotticisms, and of estimating the value of a work

\* See Critical Review, April 1782.

such as I have described, I may subjoin, for their edification, a few examples :—

*Mortification*—From *mort*, death ; an endowment from property available at the death of the testator.

*Flunkie*—A footman ; literally a *sidesman* or attendant at your flank.

*Bawbie*—A halfpenny, a supposed corruption of baby, a coin issued in Scotland when King James VI. was a child.

*Stour*—Dust in motion.

*I am moving my house*—I am changing my residence.

*I am quite affronted at your sitting there*—I am shocked, &c.

*Having one gown to wash another*—Having one gown to wear while another is washing.

*Yesterday was a week*—Yesterday se'ennight.

*To-morrow will be a fortnight*—To-morrow fortnight.

*Change your feet, walk into the fire, and don't sit on the door*—  
Change your shoes and stockings, draw close to the fire, and don't sit near the door.

*Come and speak to me*—Come and hear me speak.

*To give a hearing*—To give a lecture or scold.

*On shanksnaggie*—Having your own shanks for your nag.—

*Cocknice*, on the Marrow-bone (Mary-le-bone) stage.

*To condescend upon particulars*—To enter into minutiae.

Among the orators from Scotland who first distinguished themselves in the House of Commons, were Mr Dundas, afterwards Viscount Melville, and Mr Wedderburn, afterwards Lord Chancellor and Earl of Roslin. These eminent individuals took entirely opposite courses in regard to their national peculiarities of speech. Wedderburn avoided with the utmost possible care the accent and phraseology of his country ; but it was remarked of him by the best judges, that although he had divested himself of the Scotch accent,

he never attained that of England. Chief Baron Macdonald alleged of him, that he had scarcely any accent at all. On the other hand, Mr Dundas, dreading the least appearance of affectation, chose rather to speak with all the broadness and raciness of his early days, so as to rival even Clerk and Braxfield, in what the author of *Peter's Letters* terms, "the music of the Doric dialect."

In connexion with the above-mentioned Dictionary of Scotticisms, I may mention, that while my father was engaged in it, he was introduced by Boswell to a much higher master in the art of lexicography. Boswell mentions the introduction among his "memorabilia for 1781." "My correspondence with him" (Dr Johnson), "during the rest of this year was, I know not why, very scanty, and all on my side. I wrote him one letter to introduce Mr Sinclair (now Sir John), the member for Caithness, to his acquaintance, and informed him in another that my wife had been affected with alarming symptoms of illness."\*

Dr Johnson resided at that time in Bolt Court, where my father was well received; but he used to say that the roughness of the Doctor's manners, and the closeness of his apartment, left a disagreeable impression upon his mind, and prevented a repetition of his visit. It was not from national resentments that he did not cultivate an acquaintance which he well knew how to value, for he always candidly admitted

\* Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, vol. iv. p. 147.

that Dr Johnson's sarcasms upon Scotland had been as useful as they were severe, and more particularly that his sneers at the dearth of timber had been the means of clothing the nakedness of the land. When he observed trees of recent growth along the route traversed by the Doctor, he would call them "Johnsonian plantations." It was his wish some years since to engage the author of these pages in a life of Johnson, which was to combine all the anecdotes related by the Doctor's numerous biographers. He even sketched out a plan, and amassed for me a quantity of materials which have since been lost: the work happily has fallen into better hands.

From his extensive acquaintance among the personal friends of Dr Johnson, my father, of necessity, possessed a number of anecdotes illustrating his character and opinions; but the few which had escaped cotemporary writers have nearly all been collected by the diligence of Croker. Of those which I have not yet seen printed, one or two specimens will not here be out of place.

A young friend of my father travelling one night to London by the Devonshire mail, found a talkative old lady by the side of a stout old gentleman in a large wig, whom she tried to engage in conversation, but who discouraged all her attempts by answering in monosyllables. At last she desisted, and the trio journeyed on in silence during the remainder of the night. When morning appeared, the old gentleman



pulled out a small pocket volume, and placing it close to one of his eyes, began to read. His tormentor seized the opportunity to interpose a salutary caution. "Sir," says she, "won't reading with so little light be apt to give you a headache?" Her gruff fellow-passenger replied with a loud voice, "There are some people, Madam, to whom reading always gives an headache." The tone and manner of the speaker could not be mistaken, and the young traveller at once demanded, "Pray, Sir, have I not the honour to be in company with Dr Samuel Johnson?"

When the Doctor, during his Scottish tour, reached St Andrews, he was much put out of humour by observing the dilapidated state of the ancient ecclesiastical and collegiate buildings, formerly among the noblest specimens of Gothic architecture in North Britain. After inspection of the ruins, he dined in company with the professors, to whom he stated, in no measured terms, his indignation at the sight of these neglected monuments, "faithful witnesses," as he termed them, "of the triumph of Reformation." Overawed by the frown of the great English moralist, the professors hardly ventured to open their lips. After a distressing pause, the youngest of them took courage, and expressed a hope that Scotland had answered his expectations. "Sir," replied the Doctor, with great vehemence, "I came here expecting to see savage men and savage manners, and I have not been disappointed."

I may be allowed to add one further anecdote, in which my father took great pleasure. Dr Johnson, descanting upon the bleak and treeless aspect of Aberdeenshire, remarked to a native proprietor, that if he searched his whole county he would not find a single tree older than the Union. “At all events,” replied the Aberdonian, “we have no such era in Scotland as the Conquest.”

## CHAPTER II.

Entrance on Public Life—State of Parties—Speech on the Dutch War—Naval Tracts—St Alban's Club—Mr President Laurens—Change of Ministers—Lord North—Rockingham Administration—Scarcity in Scotland—Highland Dress—Reform in Parliament—Shelburne Administration—Pamphlet on Gibraltar—Coalition—Pamphlets on Finance—Pitt Administration—Westminster Scrutiny—History of the Revenue—Death of Mrs Sinclair—Second Visit to the Continent—Bishop Watson—Baronetcy.

My father was a member of the British Parliament upwards of thirty years, throughout a period the most eventful in the annals of his country, whether we consider the policy of successive governments at home, or our relation to the various powers abroad. At the general election in 1780, when he had attained his twenty-sixth year, he was unanimously chosen to represent his native county. He entered the House of Commons unpledged and independent; he had no personal interests to advance, and no family connexion with any leader of either party. It was a disadvantage to him that Caithness only returned a member to Parliament alternately with Bute, so that his political existence appeared precarious. His first introduction

was to Lord North, whom, all things considered, he felt called upon to support. He was not insensible to the disasters which the incompetency of that minister and his colleagues had brought upon the kingdom ; their inadequate application to public business, their ignorance of foreign politics, their negligence in not cultivating the friendship of our natural allies, and their lavish expenditure of public money. At the same time, he felt still greater repugnance to unite himself with the Opposition. As a British patriot he disliked their anti-British sentiments and speeches ; he could not tolerate their avowed friendship with the open enemies of England ; he was disgusted to hear the orators of the party magnifying the strength of America, to the disparagement of our own ; calling the American cause “ the cause of liberty,” and designating the American soldiers “ our armies.” It appeared to him highly criminal for British senators publicly to express their exultation, that British troops were perishing ingloriously in the very country which had but yesterday been our own—which we ourselves had called into being, fostered into maturity, and protected, when in danger, to the exhaustion of our own resources. He was also of opinion, that America would concede to Lord North and his colleagues terms of peace more favourable to the honour and interests of Great Britain, than the Opposition, if in power, could, consistently with their former state-

ments and proceedings, have demanded. With these views he intimated to Sir Grey Cooper, who took a leading part in the ministerial business of the House of Commons, that he would have no objection to second the Address at the opening of the Session in 1781. The answer of Lord North was cordial towards the young member, and at the same time betrayed the painful embarrassments under which the government was labouring.

“ Bushy Park, Nov. 13, 1781.

“ Sir,

“ I cannot sufficiently express how much I feel myself obliged to you for the letter you wrote to Sir Grey Cooper, offering to second the address. I had already written to a mover and a seconder, or I should have availed myself of your very kind and friendly offer. But although this circumstance prevents me from having recourse to you, either as mover or seconder, I hope that we shall have your assistance in support of the address. The difficulties in which we are involved by the present situation of public affairs, added to the abilities, activity, and violence of our opposers, will render it necessary for his Majesty's servants to call for the support of all their friends. On your zeal and friendly attachment I know we may depend, and I feel great satisfaction in that conviction, and I hope and trust that nothing will prevent you from giving us your countenance and support. I

have the honour to be, with great truth and respect,  
sir, your most faithful and humble servant,

“NORTH.”

The address pledged the House to a vigorous prosecution of the war, till a safe and honourable peace could be procured, implying their resolution to preserve the integrity of the empire.

Mr Sinclair appears for a short time to have been on terms of friendly intercourse with Lord North. Dining one day with that minister at his official residence in Downing Street, my father remarked on the convenience of the situation for the despatch of public business. “It is so,” said the Premier, “but,” added he, in reference to the then recent riots under Lord George Gordon, “you are not probably aware of its great advantages in time of popular commotion, of which I very lately have had experience. The street is narrow at its entrance, and therefore can be easily defended; and it has no other outlet. The house, though large behind, presents but a small front, having only three windows on a floor: and in case of necessity there is an easy access in the rear for receiving military aid from the Horse Guards.” While Mr Sinclair, in common with many other independent members, lamented the inactivity of the minister, he admired his wit, his versatility, and financial skill; and agreed with Mr Fox in considering him “the most accomplished speaker that ever

sat in Parliament." Harassed by the increasing difficulties of the war with America, Lord North was sometimes heard to wish that Continent had never been discovered. He in part escaped the sarcasms of his opponents by falling asleep during a long debate, leaving to Sir Grey Cooper the task of noting down what he would afterwards be called upon to answer. My father used to give a curious instance of this happy faculty of somnolence in the good-natured minister. During a debate on ship-building some tedious speaker entered on a historical detail, in which, commencing with Noah's ark, he traced the progress of the art regularly downwards. When he came to build the Spanish Armada, Sir Grey inadvertently awoke the slumbering Premier, who enquired at what era the honourable gentleman had arrived. Being answered, "We are now in the reign of Queen Elizabeth," "Dear Sir Grey," said he, "why not let me sleep a century or two more?"\*

In 1781 the young senator made his first speech in the House. The occasion was memorable. To the hostile confederacy against which Great Britain had been for some time struggling single-handed, was now added her most ancient ally. The Dutch, under the

\* There is much humour in this reply ; but it must yield the palm, I think, to a happy answer made in the American Congress. An interminable orator, haranguing empty benches, whispered to a friend, "I am speaking to *posterity*." "If you go on at this rate," said the other, "your speech will not be done till you see your audience before you."

influence of France, had violated their alliance with this country; they had entered into engagements with America; they had loaded us with injuries and affronts, and withheld all satisfactory explanation. It was among Mr Sinclair's leading principles *never to despair of the commonwealth*. He deprecated the despondency expressed by various members as both dangerous and unfounded. This speech, being the first delivered by my father in the House, claims a place in these pages.

He expressed a mixture of regret and indignation, in which the latter was the chief ingredient, at the perfidy and hostility of Holland; a country bound to us by the strongest ties of ancient intercourse, by similarity of opinions and of prejudices, by gratitude, and by interest. While so many powers were leagued against Britain, that Holland should join the hostile confederacy was indeed astonishing; and to that country England might apply the proverbial words, *et tu Brute!* He recollected on this occasion the sentiment of De Witt, who had invariably looked upon Great Britain as the natural ally of Holland. The reasoning of this great and virtuous citizen should revive the spirits of gentlemen in that House, and determine them to support the dignity of the British empire with manliness and vigour. De Witt had said, that if ever Holland broke with Great Britain, the latter, from her superior local advantages, must prevail. The Dutch shipping avoided even in the



fairest weather the rocky and dangerous shores of France; and in tempestuous seasons were obliged to sail under the English coast: how easy, therefore, for English privateers to intercept their trade in the Channel? How easy, also, to deprive them of their most valuable fisheries, the bays and estuaries of Scotland, whence to our eternal disgrace, they drew annually five millions sterling! He exhorted the House to be firm. The courage and resources of the country were not yet exhausted. They were yet sufficient to extricate us out of all our difficulties. "But," he continued, "if you flinch; if you lose by timid counsels your rank and dignity amongst the states of Europe, farewell, a long farewell to all your greatness! For when we fall, we shall fall like Lucifer, never to rise again! If despondency exist, it exists only in the Senate. All ranks without doors are in the highest spirits, fitting out privateers against the enemies of their country, and raising subscriptions for its defence. With this example of energy and patriotism without doors, how shameful that doubt and fear should prevail within the walls of this House! For my own part, I can have no sympathy with the opposers of this address, nor can I lend my voice to their amendments. From my soul I declare my hearty resolution to resist all the enemies of my country."

The amendment proposed by the Opposition, dis-

approving of the war, was rejected by a majority of 79.

From this period the gloom occasioned by the vast naval confederacy against this country continued to increase. The triumphs of our navy in the days of Queen Elizabeth, of Cromwell, and of George II., were almost effaced by a long series of disappointments and calamities. Senegal, St Vincent, Grenada, Tobago, and other British settlements had been taken by the French; and the actions fought by Keppel, Byron, Parker, Graves, and Rodney, with the allied fleets, had been unsuccessful or indecisive. Nothing could be more dismal than the forebodings of my father's correspondents at this time. "I am heartily sorry," says the member for Staffordshire, Sir John Wrottesley, "for the spirited exertions of our enemies, and I much fear that their hopes of the annihilation of our naval force increase daily." "I have communicated your information," says the member for Sarum, Mr Hussey, "but in vain,—nor indeed do I think the salvation of the country is to be effected by voluntary subscriptions. My temper does not lead me to despair, and, therefore, I will hope for more virtue and better times."

The noble lord at the head of the Admiralty was the Earl of Sandwich, described by my father as a gay, dissipated man, better fitted for shining at court than for presiding at a public board. Early in 1782,

Mr Fox proposed a resolution, "That during the year preceding, naval affairs had been grossly mismanaged." Lord Mulgrave, whose situation, as a Lord of the Admiralty, afforded him opportunities of the best information, augmented the general gloom by some unguarded or misrepresented speech on this vitally important subject. He was reported to have said, "that it was an incontrovertible truth (and the times of King William and Queen Anne supplied examples of the justice of the remark), that whenever the French directed their whole attention to the improvement and increase of their marine, they rendered it superior to the fleet of Great Britain, and were able to contend with us for the dominion of the ocean."

In reply to this assertion, Mr Sinclair published a very seasonable pamphlet, entitled, "Thoughts on the Naval strength of the British Empire." He thus explains the object and occasion of the work:—"When the affairs of a nation are unsuccessfully conducted, it is natural to view every circumstance in the darkest light. Its present situation is always painted in the most deplorable colours; its future prospects are considered to be still more gloomy; nay, political sceptics do not hesitate to doubt the existence of its former splendour. In this manner the spirit of the nation is depressed, the vigour of its efforts is relaxed; its enemies exult over it, and it seems ready to crouch under the fury of their attacks."

"It is difficult on any other principle to account

for an idea which has been lately spread abroad, and has found its way into the great council of the nation : the tendency of which is to depreciate the former strength and character of the British navy. In the days of conquest and of triumph we have always ventured to consider ourselves as the natural sovereigns of the ocean ; and even foreigners, however partial they may have been to the maritime honour of their respective countries, have in general acknowledged the justice of our claim to the dominion of the sea.\* How much, therefore, must we feel ourselves humbled, when we are told, in the days of our adversity, by one who, considering his office, his profession, and character, ought not to have been misinformed, ‘ *that the navy of France alone always was, and always must be, superior to that of England, when the French bent their whole attention to that particular department.* ’ ”

After this introduction, the author institutes a com-

\* “ L’ Angleterre a depuis long temps gagné la superiorité sur la mer,” says a respectable political author, Beausobre. Introduction Générale à l’ Etude de la Politique, p. 514. The famous M. de Real, in his Science du Gouvernement, tom. ii. p. 340, asserts, “ que les armes navales que la Grande Bretagne entretient, la rendent supérieure à quelque puissance maritime que ce soit.” The verses of Voltaire on the English nation are well known—

“ Ils sont Rois sur les eaux,  
Leur flotte impérieuse asservissant Neptune,  
Des bouts de l’univers appelle la Fortune.”

*La Henriade, Chant premier.*

parison between Great Britain and France, with respect to all the circumstances on which naval strength could be supposed to depend ; such as extent of coast, number and position of harbours, capabilities for anchorage, geographical position, fisheries, commerce, materials for ship-building, naval architecture, provisions, nautical skill, national character, and form of government. He shows that Great Britain enjoyed, in all these respects, an incontestable superiority over her rival ; and to establish his conclusion, appeals to the authority of the most eminent historians and naval writers of France, including Deslandes, Millot, Du Tot, Voltaire, Raynal, De Real, and especially the Count de Boulainvilliers, whose work was designed to reanimate his countrymen, depressed in the preceding war by their calamities at sea. Mr Sinclair goes on to prove that England had availed herself of the advantages he had enumerated, having gained an almost uninterrupted series of triumphs, from the times of Elizabeth to the peace of Paris. The only period, during which the rival nations were nearly matched at sea, was the reign of William III. ; when the French, off Beachy Head, gained a transient superiority, followed by a decisive defeat off La Hogue, which their navy was never able to recover. He subjoins some curious tables, enumerating the ships of war taken or destroyed by each nation during different seasons of hostility. The result may be thus stated :—

In the wars of King William—

The French lost 59 ships, mounting 2244 guns.

The English lost 50 ships, mounting 1112 guns.

—	—
9	1132

In the wars of Queen Anne—

The French lost 52 ships, mounting 3094 guns.

The English lost 38 ships, mounting 1596 guns.

—	—
14	1498

State of the navy of France during the preceding war—

	Ships.	Guns.	Men.
Line of battle,	95		
Frigates, .	142		
	—		
	237	9682	110,775

Taken or destroyed by the English—

	Ships.	Guns.	Men.
Line of battle,	47		
Frigates, .	84		
	—		
	131	5278	60,420

Total of the French navy at the peace in 1763—

Ships.	Guns.	Men.
106	4404	50,335

This astonishing success of England, he observes, led the Abbé Raynal to acknowledge that “ Great Britain, by her maritime force, could balance the navy of the universe.” My father, after remarking that the character of the war had changed, and must from that time become exclusively naval, urges upon the Admiralty the necessity of greater diligence and activity in their department : he exhorts the King and Parliament to give some marked and unequivocal demonstration that the naval service is the surest road to fame, to fortune, and to glory ; and he reminds British seamen of all ranks, that on their hardihood, intrepidity, and patriotism, not only the honour of their profession, but the existence of their country must depend. “ These,” he concludes, “ are the grounds which induce me to hope better for the future ; for though our enemies are numerous, and unfortunately united in the great object of humbling the British flag, yet the success of their scheme must depend fully as much upon our inactivity as upon their strength. Let us bend our whole attention to the naval department ; let us be firm, steady, and united ; and it is still possible that the war, which at present seems to threaten our own coasts, may yet be carried into the very havens of our enemies.”

These expressions of confidence in our naval strength were justified within the short period of eight days after the publication of the pamphlet, by news from the West Indies of the great victory gained by

Admiral Rodney over De Grasse on the 12th of April.

Upon the author of this well-timed publication congratulations were poured forth from all quarters on the success of his performance. "I have read your work," says Morris Robinson, Esq., M. P., afterwards Lord Rokeby, "and have no scruple to affirm it to be the most respectable work ever published by a native of this island. In it you have fully demonstrated the power Great Britain possesses of maintaining a naval force superior to any establishment the resources of France are enabled to furnish. That is so very material a consideration at all times, but peculiarly so in the present situation of affairs, that you are undoubtedly entitled to the thanks of all your countrymen for your performance." But the author was peculiarly gratified by the following passage, communicated in a letter from the very individual whose supposed opinions he controverted. In a letter, dated on board the *Courageux*, Spithead, 22d June, 1782, Lord Mulgrave says,—  
"My expressions and meaning have been mistaken; but I cannot say unfortunately, since the mistake has produced so handsome an eulogium on the naval service of this country, and so comfortable a prospect of its strength and resources from so able a hand; and has, at the same time, shown to the public that a member of the British Senate, not connected by profession or office with the navy, has made it so



much his study. It is of little consequence whether any opinions of mine are mistaken or misrepresented, but if the opinions which you combat have been generally entertained, and could be supposed to derive any degree of weight from being imputed to me, it was essential they should be refuted with the degree of force and authority which your abilities and name must give to the refutation."

The favourable reception given by the public to this pamphlet induced the author, not long afterwards, to print a second tract, showing how the country might most effectually improve the advantages and resources explained in the first. As a general anxiety prevailed to procure peace on any terms, Mr Sinclair begins with the following spirited observations:—"The reports which have been lately circulated of an approaching peace induced me to examine a very curious and important political paper, entitled, 'An Historical Memorial of the Negotiation of France and England from the 26th of March to the 20th of September, 1761.' It is translated from a French original, which was published by the Court of France with a view of proving that every step was taken at that time, consistent with the dignity of an independent power, to procure an accommodation. The splendid success which had attended the arms of Great Britain, and the low state to which France was reduced, are too well known to require any particular recital. Yet the memorial

alluded to (near the conclusion) contains this judicious and well-founded observation :—‘ They who talk so readily upon all occasions that *we must have peace*, do not consider that, however well disposed a sovereign may be for the re-establishment of tranquillity, his desire cannot be effectual but when it is equally sincere on the part of the other belligerent powers.’ To find such a sentiment held forth by a French courtier and statesman (for the Duke de Choiseul subscribes the memorial), at a moment when France was reduced to the very brink of destruction, and to hear, on the other hand, the mean and pusillanimous manner in which the citizens of this free country are apt at present to express themselves, I confess, fills me with equal grief and astonishment. That peace is at this time a desirable object to a country that has been so long engaged in a war unattended with many prosperous events, no man is more willing to allow ; but that we are as yet reduced to a state that ought to make us wish for peace on any terms, however degrading and humillating, is a tenet which every man who sincerely wishes the glory and prosperity of his country ought strenuously to oppose.” He then proceeds to comment on the humiliating terms which England, it was understood, would be required by the confederates to concede. He shows that our financial difficulties, however great, were not so formidable as theirs ; that the conduct of the war, on our part, especially on

the American continent, might be essentially improved ; and that one resource remained, even if every other should fail, for dividing our foes, and gaining new allies. We might support, in conjunction with the other powers of Europe, and in particular with the armed neutrality, a general system of colonial emancipation. “ If,” says he, “ the colonies of France, and, more especially, if those of Spain were open to our manufactures, we should have the greatest reason to rejoice at the independence of America. Indeed, a general colonial emancipation would be a fortunate conclusion of the present war, both for this country and for mankind. Those rich and fertile provinces which South America contains have too long groaned under the dominion of the proud and sluggish Spaniard, and might soon wear a new face were they opened to the exertions and industry of this country and of Europe. To question whether the different powers of the European continent would support such a system is to doubt of their being possessed of common ambition, or indeed of common sense ; for were the house of Bourbon to retain its colonies there, while Great Britain lost hers, every one must perceive that the safety and independence of Europe in general would be endangered.” Without pausing to speculate on the effects which this curious and interesting suggestion might have produced, Mr Sinclair proceeds to answer two prevailing fallacies : namely, that it was difficult to procure

seamen to man the ships already built ; and that it was still more difficult to build more when wanted. His details and calculations on the latter point, that of building ships, cannot easily be abridged ; but his plan for providing seamen without impressment is too ingenious to be passed over.

He proposes that the whole coast of the three kingdoms should be placed under the superintendence of naval officers, who should register the seafaring people in their respective districts : that when men were voted for the navy, each district should be called upon to provide a certain proportion, according to the number of its maritime population ; and that in providing this quota, the inspecting officer should, if necessary, adopt a series of measures, each more vigorous than its predecessor. He was, first of all, to offer a bounty, and beat up for volunteers ; he was next to lay an embargo upon vessels of all sizes and denominations throughout the district, and thereby to interest all classes in procuring, as soon as possible, the required quota ; he was then, in the presence of two or more justices of the peace, to cast lots which of the seamen in his register should be compelled to serve ; and lastly, in case of their refusal, he was to employ compulsion—not by means of press-gangs, which was a barbarous method, and gave seamen a distaste for the service, but by means of the civil, and, if necessary, the military power.

Some idea of the unpopularity of the naval service

at that time, may be derived from a letter of the member for Staffordshire to Mr Sinclair, blaming the Admiralty for "great negligence in not having press-gangs in the internal parts of the kingdom. For many sailors," says he, "are secreted here, who fly from the metropolis and its environs, in order to escape the hot press now going forward, and with proper attention and proper powers to the magistracy, many useful hands may be found."

Mr Sinclair concludes his second pamphlet with an ardent and patriotic wish, that the navy should be rewarded with a larger distribution of honours and distinctions than had been customary. He recommends the institution of a naval order of knighthood, to reward, by appropriate decorations, the gallant achievements of our navy, "a new coinage," as it has been figuratively called, "of which the value could not be depressed, nor the stamp counterfeited, nor the ore exhausted." An approximation to Mr Sinclair's system has since been made, by extending the Order of the Bath, which now includes officers of a lower rank, and in greater numbers, than formerly.

A monument of Mr Sinclair's zeal and industry in collecting materials for these naval pamphlets, is still extant, in a huge pile of folios and scarce tracts on nautical affairs now before me in his library.\*

\* The following is the conclusion of a whimsical critique on the above-mentioned Tracts, taken from the Whitehall Evening Post for August 27, 1782 :—"The writer deserves a place at

Before leaving finally a subject in which my father did not again take any prominent part, I may mention, that he once presented a copy of his *Naval Tracts* to Lord Nelson, and received from him an answer, which, to admirers of that great man, may not be uninteresting :—

“ Merton, Dec. 8, 1801.

“ Dear Sir,

“ I had the honour of receiving, through the hands of Mr Mollison, your very elegant present of a book, to the subject of which too much attention cannot be paid ; and, without a compliment, no man in the country is so able to place this important matter in its proper view before the public. I can hardly believe, however anxiously I have endeavoured to deserve it, the high compliment you are pleased to bestow upon me. But, dear sir, I beg you to be assured that I am, with every sentiment of obligation, your most obedient servant,

“ NELSON AND BRONTE.”

I have already mentioned, that one of the reasons which induced Mr Sinclair, on coming into Parliament, to support the administration of Lord North, was the hope that a safe and honourable termination

the Admiralty Board, and we hear with pleasure that the author of a certain unpopular speech” (alluding to Lord Mulgrave) “ has left a vacancy for him there.”

of the American war might be more advantageously negotiated by that Minister than by his opponents. But a closer acquaintance with the feelings and projects of the Government convinced him that no serious overture for peace was likely to proceed from that quarter. At the same time, he apprehended that the partiality of the Opposition for America might, if they rose to power, lead to precipitate and unwarrantable concession.

I find, among my father's papers, a list drawn up by him about this time for his own private use, describing the state of parties in the House of Commons. The number of members able to attend their duty was about 430, of whom 230 generally supported the Administration, and 200 the Opposition. Among the nominal adherents of each party, he reckons about 50 on either side, whose support was lukewarm and precarious. These consisted of Earl Gower's friends, and of some independent country gentlemen, who voted according to their own judgment, without regard to the authority of a leader. This nice balance of power was incompatible with a strong government. At any time, the mere fraction of sixteen added to the smaller party, would have made it a majority.

Under these critical circumstances, the member for Caithness held frequent conferences with the other country gentlemen, representing to them the influence they might acquire from co-operation, compared with their present insignificance as isolated individuals.

He suggested that men of talent and patriotism should unite to form, out of the two great parties, a powerful Cabinet, and retrieve the sinking fortunes of the nation. His list contains the names of a hundred and five members, whom he considered more or less independent, and with whom, directly or indirectly, he might hold communication.

With these materials to work upon, he printed and widely circulated four appeals to the independent senators of Great Britain, entitled, "Public Hints," urging them to throw off the servitude of party, and combine their efforts for the preservation of their country. "That such a contest," says he, "should still be kept up, and that the more our enemies are multiplied, the fiercer and more virulent it should become; nay, that discord should triumph at a crisis when *all parties* must be sensible of the folly of their past conduct, strikes every impartial and thinking man with equal astonishment and horror. For, on the one hand, it is evident that in many particulars the present Administration must have been greatly to blame: otherwise, we could never have been overwhelmed by such a series of misfortunes. It is clear that their measures could never have proved so uniformly unsuccessful, had they been vigilant enough in procuring proper information; had they been sufficiently active and spirited in forming and executing their plans; and had they resolutely determined to punish those by whom their orders were neglected.



But, on the other hand, if those who are not in power claim *any merit* from the misfortunes or misconduct of their opponents, and think themselves exempted from any share in the sources of our public calamities, a little consideration will prove how egregiously they are mistaken.

“ To establish their claims to such an exemption, they must prove that it has been no injury to public discipline, to have held forth an asylum, into the capacious bosom of which every individual might be admitted, whose misconduct, whether in a civil, naval, or military department, had rendered him obnoxious to the justice of the laws.

“ They must also prove that no injury has accrued to the state from inflaming the passions of America, from raising the enmity of our enemies, from magnifying their revenues and their power, whilst at the same time they undervalued the strength, the spirit, and resources of our own country.

“ Lastly, they must for ever obliterate from a volume, not undeservedly accounted the very Korai of the party, the memorable words which fell from the pen of Junius : ‘ Their declaration’ (namely of those who were accounted the heads of Opposition) ‘ gave spirit and argument to the colonies ; and while, perhaps, they meant no more than the ruin of the Minister, they in effect divided one half of the empire from the other.’ ” \*

\* Junius, Letter I.

By means of these papers, and by force of personal solicitation, he prevailed upon a number of independent members to meet occasionally at the St Alban's Tavern, for the purpose of discussing the prospects of the country and the proceedings of the Cabinet. In his correspondence with these gentlemen I find a curious illustration of the difficulties attending an incipient political project, and of the tact, energy, and perseverance required to surmount them. Letters, of course, are not to be expected from all the members, as many would be personally solicited, and notes of apology for absence would not be sent by those who regularly attended.

Mr (afterwards Sir William) Pulteney is "obliged by the perusal of the papers, and will attend as early as possible in the House of Commons, to receive farther explanations."

Lord Mahon consents to a resolution, reprobating "offensive war upon the Continent of America against the British revolted colonies, as tending to weaken our efforts against the House of Bourbon."

Sir Herbert Mackworth, member for Cardiff, enters warmly into the measures suggested: he is detained in the country; "but," continues he, "I beg you will consider me as one of your number present, and joining in the plan as one of the society: I can very safely depute you my proxy, if it may be admitted on the present occasion, having a perfect

confidence in the uprightness of your intentions, and abilities to adapt them to great public good."

Viscount Maitland (now Earl of Lauderdale) writes in great haste, expecting what he terms "a motion of a conciliatory nature, declaring the inexpediency of the affairs of the country remaining in the same hands, without specifying who or what number ought to be removed."

Sir Robert Herries, member for Dumfries, "thinks Mr Sinclair is entitled to much praise for having executed as well as planned a laudable institution," and requests a conference with him on the subject.

The Earl of Surrey (afterwards Duke of Norfolk) will "meet Mr Sinclair, and the gentlemen mentioned by him, at the St Alban's."

Mr Sibthorpe, member for Boston, "will give Mr Sinclair's papers much attention in the first moment of leisure."

Mr J. Rolle (afterwards Lord Rolle) "will attend with great readiness the next meeting at the St Alban's, and will be happy in co-operating with other independent members to support such measures as may appear to them for the real interest of his king and country."

Mr Lygon (afterwards Earl Beauchamp), having been called into the country, "is much obliged by Mr Sinclair's recollection of a runaway," and describes the county of Worcester "in high spirits,

thinking a change of Ministers implies every blessing that can restore a kingdom."

"Mr George Ross being prevented from attending by illness, hopes that the meeting was numerous and respectable, and will send in the evening for a list."

Sir Henry Houghton, member for Preston, "receives with great satisfaction Mr Sinclair's information that there is a prospect of an union of independent members of Parliament in some efforts to save their sinking country."

Mr Brickdale, member for Bristol, "will be glad at any time to communicate with Mr Sinclair on the subject of his plans."

Mr Montague, in six successive notes, assures Mr Sinclair that he is "full of zeal in the cause," and will observe "secrecy," adding, however, that "he is forbidden by his physicians not only to attend the House, but even to hold conversation at any length."

Mr Strutt, member for Maldon, enters warmly into Mr Sinclair's plans; has communicated them to Mr Bramston, Mr Sibthorpe, and Mr Bulloch; recommends caution; and proposes that the first meeting should consist of not more than ten or twelve members; "for," says he, "every man, however shackled, wishes to be considered as free and independent." He adds, "Whether the present Ministry is equal to the conduct of the war, is not for me to determine, and yet I wish a change of two persons."

But I will be bold to say, that neither this nor any other Ministry can be active and frugal who have to contend with an Opposition so virulent and ——— as the present. I confine myself to the leaders and their particular adherents. Something must be done to compel the Minister, whoever he may be, to economy; and to excite to decided and vigorous measures: at the same time opposition must be silenced.”

But perhaps the nature and objects of the St Alban's Club, and the sentiments generally pervading its members, may be best collected from the following letter of Mr Gilbert, the member for Litchfield:—

“Lillyshall, 2d Jan. 1782.

“Dear Sir,

“I have been in the country ten days; but so much engaged in a variety of business as to prevent my attention to those very important concerns respecting the public which have of late so much engrossed your thoughts and mine; however, from a desire to contribute the utmost of my endeavours to promote so excellent a plan, and to show that regard which is due to you for your very laudable exertions therein, I have retired for an hour or two from other affairs to resume the consideration of our favourite object, and to communicate my thoughts a little farther to you.

“I think we cannot do better service at present than by communicating our plan to such public-

spirited members as we happen to be connected or acquainted with, who have the real love of their country at heart; all these, I doubt not, will cheerfully co-operate with and assist us, in a work so essential at this crisis, and which promises so much relief to this poor, I may add unfortunate, divided, and distracted country; at the very brink of ruin, whilst she is possessed of resources sufficient to extricate her from her present distresses, to make her a scourge to her haughty and perfidious enemy, and to raise her to a greater pitch of glory than she has ever yet attained; if they were properly exerted, and her affairs administered with that spirit, equity, justice, and economy which they ought.

“I think with you, that we ought to be prepared with a plan for our coadjutors to look up to, for the speedy attaining these desirable ends; when that is settled, I trust there is virtue and spirit enough yet left in this country, both in the sovereign and the people, to accomplish the great and good work.

“Notwithstanding my engagements in private affairs, I shall devote many hours to the consideration of these most important concerns before I have the pleasure of seeing you, which I hope will be on the twentieth of this month. I have been from Cotton some days, and shall not return till Sunday or Monday se’ennight, having many engagements in this and the adjoining counties. I have the honour

to be, with the utmost respect, dear sir, your most faithful and obedient servant,

“THOMAS GILBERT.”

Mr Sinclair laid before these and other political friends various resolutions, to be submitted to the House of Commons preliminary to changes in the government. The most important were the following.

“Resolved, that it is the opinion of this House, that in the present dangerous and critical state of public affairs, it is expedient and necessary to make such alterations in some of the different departments of the state as may revive the spirit and confidence of the people, and unite them in the firmest and most strenuous efforts against their natural enemies.

“Resolved, that it is necessary to establish a system of public economy in the financial department of the government.

“Resolved, That it is necessary to adopt such measures as shall reform the inadequate representation of the people in the House of Commons.”

In the event of the adoption by the House of these resolutions, my father was prepared with two plans of a Coalition Ministry, one to be headed by Earl Gower, the other by the Marquis of Rockingham. The names of Fox, Burke, and Pitt occur in both lists. To ascertain the views of Earl Gower, Mr Sinclair addressed a letter to the Earl's son-in-

law, Mr Macdonald, afterwards Chief Baron of England, soliciting his concurrence in the resolutions. Mr Macdonald replied, that Lord Gower thought “resolutions and addresses impolitic things, as, after all, they could not point out men or measures, but must leave that still to the Crown.”—“Enough,” he adds, “has been done to make some change unavoidable. I do not see that we should advance in any degree, by multiplying the evidences of the sense of the nation against the continuance of power, where it is now placed.”

Among the papers connected with the St Alban's Club, I find the following sketch of a letter to Mr Pitt:—

“Mr Sinclair presents his compliments to Mr Pitt; and in case any alteration in the proposed resolutions, of a union among the independent members of the House, comes to be considered, begs that he would be so obliging as to communicate the following observations to the meeting:—

“1. Any union of members, composed of such as have generally voted on one side of the House, would not answer any effectual purpose,—a union of minority members would only be Opposition in miniature; and if such as supported Administration, and considered themselves as independent, were to join together, they would still have the same prejudices against Opposition, by which, in a great measure, their present conduct is directed. The prejudices of moderate and in-



dependent men can only be got the better of by intercourse with men of other sentiments ; and Mr Sinclair is fully persuaded, if such an intercourse were established, that many men, on the one side of the House, would not be found so corrupted or so much influenced by the power of the Crown, and many others, on the other side, would not be found so violent or so democratical, as at present is currently imagined.

“ 2. Mr Sinclair is particularly anxious to have such a union established, because he has received information this morning, from a person whose name he cannot communicate, but which he considers to be abundantly authentic, that there is still a door open for re-establishing a connexion with America, and that there is not a single circumstance that would contribute more to so desirable an event as the union that is proposed. He can also assure the meeting, from another quarter, that a leading man in the Congress has lately informed his correspondent in London, that the Americans are desirous of a peace, and are not bound to have the consent of France to a treaty with this country.

“ 3. Mr Sinclair believes that a sufficient number of friends to the present Administration might be procured, who would join with any respectable members who support Opposition on the basis of the propositions he has suggested ; and that, when the motions of Opposition are supported by them, they cannot fail to be successful. He begs leave to suggest to the

consideration of gentlemen, whether we are not now reduced to a situation that ought to make men of property and of public spirit decline standing upon punctilios, when, if something is not done very speedily, the nation can hardly be preserved. The friends to Opposition may be the less inclined to insist upon explicit declarations, when they consider that men who have opposed the lengths to which some who are considered as too violent by the impartial have carried their systems of reformation,—that such men, I say, cannot well go farther than to declare, ‘ We shall consider your plans of a constitutional nature deliberately, and will give them every reasonable assistance.’ Any stronger declaration would be very properly considered as a renunciation of their former principles, which it is not reasonable to demand.

“ 4. and lastly, When an Opposition is established, men of violent and fiery tempers generally take the lead, and moderate men cannot join any party where such individuals are permitted to be the dictators : unless, therefore, a third party is established, we are likely to continue in the same distracted state we have done, without any material alteration. And, indeed, Mr Sinclair is himself persuaded that the more unsuccessful we are, the firmer the present Administration will be riveted in their places ; for the more violent the leaders of Opposition are, the less inclined moderate men will be to give them any assistance.”

During these transactions, a circumstance occurred

which stimulated the country gentlemen to more decided measures. Mr Laurens, formerly President of Congress, and recognised under that title by the British Commissioners in America, had been sent to Europe with full powers to conclude a treaty with Holland, then clandestinely negotiating with the United States. The vessel which conveyed this envoy was captured by a British cruiser; and his papers, which he had taken the precaution to throw overboard, were fortunately recovered and transmitted to the British Cabinet. Laurens himself was committed close prisoner to the tower; but in consequence of strong representations in the House of Commons by the Opposition, he was liberated on parole, after an imprisonment of several months. My father was introduced to him by their common friend, Mr Oswald, who was afterwards employed by our Government to conclude a peace with America. They became intimate, and freely discussed the means of adjusting an accommodation between the countries. In one of their conversations, Mr Sinclair was authorized to acquaint the Ministry, that if they would permit Mr Laurens to visit Paris he would ascertain for them what terms could be procured, and return with the information. He hinted, at the same time, his conviction, that these terms would be more favourable than they anticipated. Mr Sinclair lost no time in communicating to the then Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Lord Stormont, this, as he thought, highly

acceptable intelligence ; but, to his astonishment, the Minister received the information with most ungracious coldness. “The Americans,” says his Lordship, “are rebels ; and we have no doubt that it will yet be in our power to subdue their rebellion. If Laurens goes to Paris, he goes at his own peril.” This impolitic speech was of course communicated by the member for Caithness to the country gentlemen, who resolved at once publicly to declare their wishes for peace. The suspicions long entertained as to the insincerity of Ministers in their amicable professions towards America, and which had furnished Fox and Burke with pregnant topics of sarcasm, were now indisputably confirmed. Many members, on whose support Lord North had reckoned, now avowed openly their resolution to abandon him.

My narrative does not require me to enter farther into the particulars which attended the resignation of Lord North. On the 20th of March, 1782, he yielded to the difficulties which had been long accumulating round him. Lord Surrey rose to propose a resolution, expressing want of confidence in the Ministry : the Premier rose at the same instant, declaring the proposal unnecessary, since the persons who had for some time conducted public business had ceased to be Ministers of the Crown.

Having quoted from my father’s papers a few reminiscences of Lord North when in power, I may here add one anecdote of that Minister, long after his resig-

nation. It is not often that fallen greatness receives testimonies of gratitude and good feeling from the objects of its former bounty. Lord North had much promoted the restoration of the forfeited estates in Scotland. Some time before that measure was agreed upon, young Cameron of Lochiel had been introduced to the Minister, who was so much pleased with his address as to remember him at a crisis when his patronage was most desirable, and to insist upon the Lochiel estate being added to the list of those to be restored. A relation of Lochiel took an opportunity to show the sense of obligation cherished by his family after the Minister was out of place, and blind. Having the captaincy of an East-Indiaman to give away, this gentleman (whose name was Cameron) wrote to Lord North, with the offer to appoint any person whom his Lordship might recommend. The retired statesman was much affected by this evidence of generous feeling, and declared, almost with tears, "This is the only instance of *undoubted gratitude* that I have ever met with."

At the head of the new Administration now formed was the Marquis of Rockingham, with Lord Shelburne and Mr Fox for Principal Secretaries of State,—Mr Pitt had no office.

A pamphlet, by Mr Sinclair, appeared soon after, entitled, "Thoughts on the Propriety of Dissolving the present Parliament." He shows the advantage of investing the Sovereign with that power, and the

reasons why, in the present instance, it should be exercised. He exposes the intrigues of the late Ministers to secure a majority in the House; laments the violence which the late concussion of parties had engendered; hopes that, in the event of a dissolution, the more factious members would be unseated by a constituency disgusted with their turbulence; and, lastly, expatiates on the pre-eminent importance of the questions which a new Parliament would have to determine, and which minds free from bitterness of past contentions would approach with greater candour. The most interesting peculiarity in this pamphlet is a table drawn up by the author to show the average duration of Parliaments from the reign of Henry VII. to the dissolution in 1780. From the table in question, it appears that this average did not exceed two years and about nine months, even including the long Parliament of Charles I., and the still longer one which his son retained in existence for the enormous period of seventeen years.

It was no small evidence of disinterestedness that a proposal for dissolving Parliament proceeded from the member for Caithness—one of the three members whose constituents were restricted to alternate representation.

Mr Sinclair was this year the successful promoter of a measure which formed, in after life, one of his most agreeable reminiscences. Scotland had twice

been visited with the miseries of famine, but in neither instance more severely than at this time. So cold and stormy was the summer of 1782, that the crops were late and unpromising. “On the fifth of October, before they had time to ripen, a frost, armed almost with the rigour of a Greenland climate, desolated, in one night, the hope of the husbandman. The grain, frost-bitten, immediately contracted a hoary whiteness. Potatoes and turnips, already dwarfish, were further injured. The produce of the garden was destitute of its usual nourishment, and the fields yielded not one-third of an ordinary crop.”\* No wholesome food could be procured; and disease, as well as famine, began to overspread, not only the whole north of Scotland, but even some districts in the south. On this occasion of general distress and alarm, the member for Caithness earnestly besought the interposition of Parliament. An objection was started that no precedent could be found for such a grant as he solicited; and that a precedent, once furnished, would lead to troublesome and endless applications. The late Ministry having long been subject to the trammels of office, adhered rigidly to forms and rules. Their successors indulged more liberal ideas. Mr Sheridan, in particular (at that

\* See Statistical Account of Fordyce, vol. iii. p. 62; Parish of Duthil, vol. iv. p. 316; vol. xiv. p. 188, &c.

time Secretary to the Treasury), entered with great zeal into the cause, and a motion was at last agreed to for a committee on the subject. Their report was so conclusive, that the House presented an address, recommending the calamitous state of the north of Scotland to his Majesty's gracious consideration, and promising to make good the expense incurred. The whole cost of this well-timed relief was little more than L.15,000; and yet no less a number than 111,521 souls, inhabitants of fifteen counties, were rescued from starvation.\*

The apprehensions entertained in Parliament that the aid afforded in this instance might lead to importunate and annoying solicitations on occasions of less necessity, received, some years afterwards, a memorable rebuke from the gratitude and high spirit of the northern population. A hurricane of unexampled severity laid waste, in 1807, some of the districts which had availed themselves of the Parliamentary grant. On this occasion my father wrote to Malcolm Laing, the historian, suggesting a petition to the Legislature for a renewal of its bounty. Mr Laing's answer is as follows:—

\* “Where parishes could do without such aid, the bounty was declined, that a larger proportion of it might go to the places where it was more wanted.”—*Statistical Account of Abernyte*, vol. ix. p. 151, Note. See also *Lethnot*, vol. iv. p. 10; and *Muirhouse*, vol. xiii. p. 166.



“ Sir,

“ I beg leave to acknowledge the honour of your letter, which I have communicated to most of the gentlemen in the county, and shall take the first opportunity of laying before a county meeting.

“ The prevailing sentiment, I believe, is this :— That although many individuals suffered severely from the storm on Christmas-day, yet, having experienced the humane interposition of Government during a season of absolute scarcity, nothing less than an actual dearth will induce the county again to apply to the bounty of Parliament. This proceeds from the apprehension of abusing or exhausting that liberality, to which the county has already been so much indebted. I have the honour to be, sir, your most obedient and humble servant,

MALCOLM LAING.

“ Kirkwall, May 25th, 1807.”

Another boon which, during the same session, my father contributed to obtain for Scotland, was not so important as the preceding, but was highly popular and acceptable. An act was passed, repealing the prohibition (19th George II.) of the ancient Highland dress. On his next journey through the Highlands, Mr Sinclair availed himself of this national concession by appearing in full Highland costume. On his way to visit Lord Breadalbane, passing through the town of Logierait, he had an amusing

proof of the association established by recent events in the minds of Highlanders, between their ancient garb and the fortunes of the house of Stuart. Having quitted his carriage, he was enjoying on foot a ramble among the wild mountain scenery of that neighbourhood, followed by a multitude of the natives, speaking Gaelic with great vehemence. An old Highlander at length accosted him in a cautious whisper, "Sir, if you are come here *in the good old cause*, I can give you to understand that there are a hundred gude men ready to join you, within the sound o' the bell o' Logierait." These simple-minded people took my father for at least an emissary of Charles Edward, or perhaps for Charles Edward himself.

The new Ministry had pledged themselves to a reform in Parliament. So early as 1779, associations had been formed to procure a more equal, or as it was termed, more constitutional representation of the people. In 1780, general deputations met in London, when resolutions of a moderate character, recommending an augmentation of the county members, were agreed upon. Mr Alderman Sawbridge had for some time made an annual motion in Parliament on the subject. Mr Sinclair had introduced it at the St Alban's tavern amongst his political friends, as the basis of a Parliamentary resolution. The public also concurred very generally in the same views; attributing the continuance of Lord North in

office, and the calamities of the country, to the corrupt state of the Legislature.

During the short recess subsequent to Lord North's resignation, Mr Sinclair employed his pen in "Lucubrations on Reform." He begins by showing how imperatively the new Ministers were bound to effect those improvements in the legislature, to which, while in Opposition, they had pledged themselves. He remarks that three schemes of Parliamentary reformation had been suggested. One was to increase the county members by a hundred; another to diminish the borough members by the same number; and the third to transfer a hundred members from boroughs to counties. He approves of the last plan, and proceeds to vindicate it from objections. Anticipating the objection that disfranchisement was an act of injustice, he insists that the privileges of individuals must give way to the general good, provided only that a compensation be made to them by the public. "How many rights," he asks, "were our Sovereigns legally possessed of, which were gradually taken away as opportunities for that purpose occurred; nay, have not the privileges which were enjoyed by the members of both Houses of Parliament been diminished, and shall the unconstitutional claims of a few petty villages be regarded?" He quotes the abolition of heritable jurisdictions in Scotland as a case in point, in which the proprietors were obliged to accept a compensation for their rights

as decreed by a court of justice. He then gives a table stating the number of electors in all the cities and boroughs of England, showing that the aggregate amounted only to about 95,000. He proposes that fifteen boroughs, containing in all only 700 voters, should be totally disfranchised; and that seventy boroughs, which in all had only 6000, should lose one member each. To dispose of the hundred seats thus rendered vacant, he suggests that thirty-eight English counties should have two additional members each; Warwickshire three; Yorkshire and Middlesex four. He allows two additional members to the city of London; the same to Westminster; and one to the borough of Southwark. "It is the opinion of some," he continues, "that London and Middlesex ought to have a much larger share in the representation of the people, from the taxes they pay, and the number of their inhabitants. The claim is not without foundation; but such is the natural weight which the capital has in every country, and such, indeed, are the privileges and advantages which London has already received (even as it has been inadequately represented), that in prudence it ought not to claim such a number of representatives as would probably excite the envy, suspicion, and jealousy of the rest of the kingdom." Adopting Dr Price's calculation, he considers eight as the proper quota of addition to the representation of Scotland, and grants two to Wales. By this arrangement, the proposed augmentation of

county members to the extent of a hundred would be completed.

In estimating the amount of compensation to the disfranchised boroughs, he values each seat at L.500 per annum, and, consequently, a hundred seats at L.50,000. In the case of such boroughs as were private property, the compensation, he thought, should be made to the owner; but in the case of larger boroughs, should be expended in improving the town, rather than enriching the constituency. Finally, he recommends that disfranchised burghers should have votes in their respective counties. The chief recommendation of this plan was, that it avoided intermeddling with the variety of franchise by which, in those days, the constitution was distinguished, and by virtue of which all interests were substantially represented.

Several replies to this pamphlet came out, and one in particular by Mr Thomas Pitt (afterwards Lord Camelford), member for Old Sarum. The quarter from which this answer proceeded was a source of triumph and amusement to the Reformers, one of whom, Lord Surrey, sarcastically remarked, that Mr Sinclair's lucubrations had "the merit of rousing the dragon of Old Sarum to defend his golden fleece from the attacks of innovators." In the present day my father's tract would be looked upon as Conservative, but it gave unbounded satisfaction to the most noted liberals of that period. The Rev. Mr Wyvill, secre-

tary to the Yorkshire Association, conveys to him, in the warmest terms, the thanks of that numerous and influential body. "I can, with truth and satisfaction, assure you," says he, "that your lucubrations have been highly approved in Yorkshire by many of the friends to constitutional improvement, who must ever respect your zeal, and public spirit, and unremitted attention to the cause of Parliamentary reformation." The point respecting which Mr Sinclair was most apprehensive of giving dissatisfaction to the reforming party, was the grant which he suggested of compensation to the disfranchised boroughs. To this grant, however, the Yorkshire Association made no objection. Mr Wyvill, indeed, even reminds him that a similar suggestion had been thrown out in the memorial of the first general deputation held in London. The following letter from Dr Price, relative to this pamphlet, will be read with much interest and some surprise :—

"Dear Sir,

"I have read your pamphlet with particular pleasure. The proposal it contains of a reform in the representation of the kingdom would, were it carried into execution, go a great way towards satisfying my wishes. I reckon this a fundamental point. Our representation is little better than a mockery. Our new ministers will, I hope, do somewhat toward giving us a *real* representation, by adopting some such scheme

as yours. They are at present almost omnipotent ; and if they don't use their power to do this, I shall think them inexcusable.

“ The manner in which you mention me is very kind, and does me honour. Deliver my best wishes to Mrs Sinclair, and accept the same yourself, from your very obedient and humble servant,

RICHARD PRICE.

“ Newington Green, May 2, 1782.”

In the following note, Lord Shelburne pointedly, and, as some might think, prophetically, describes the vast importance of the question :—

“ Lord Shelburne presents his compliments to Mr Sinclair, and returns him many thanks for the enclosure of a late pamphlet, containing much useful information, and written with a candour, which cannot fail of influencing a question that must sooner or later decide the fate of the country.”

The letters above given are worth notice, from the character of their respective writers, and from the peculiar aspect of the question at that early stage. To these communications from reformers, I may subjoin a paragraph from a letter of Lord Hailes, written two years afterwards, and pronouncing a judgment diametrically opposed to theirs :—“ I wish you an harmonious session, and that you and your friends

may not split among yourselves. I always dread any motion about Parliamentary Reform ; that will jumble parties, and then all is over."

When Parliament met, Mr Pitt brought forward his celebrated motion for the appointment of a committee to enquire into the state of the popular representation. But this measure, notwithstanding the eloquence of the proposer, and the exertions of its supporters, including Mr Fox and other Ministers, was rejected by a majority of twenty. Mr Thomas Pitt, to whom we have referred, took the lead in opposing the motion of his relative.

The debate on that occasion made a deep impression upon my father's mind. He now conceived his own plan of reform to have gone too far, and proceeded accordingly to modify it in another tract, entitled, "Reflections on the Expediency of Increasing the present Number of the Representatives of the People."

The new Ministry was of short duration. In the course of about three months Lord Rockingham died. Lord Shelburne succeeded him as First Lord of the Treasury. Mr Fox, taking offence at this appointment, unexpectedly resigned ; and Mr Pitt being offered, at the early age of twenty-three, the high station of Chancellor of the Exchequer, was induced to take a place in the Administration.

The Member for Caithness cordially supported the Shelburne Cabinet. He considered Lord Shelburne as a true patriot, and an able statesman, deeply con-



versant with domestic as well as foreign policy. The talents, also, of the young Chancellor of the Exchequer, were early appreciated by my father. On the first appearance of Mr Pitt in Parliament, he predicted his future greatness ; and had a vivid recollection, above half a century afterwards, of the astonishment and applause with which an audience, accustomed to the most splendid efforts of eloquence, listened to the first oration from the son of Chatham. He was the more surprised at the genius displayed in that masterly speech, from seeing the new member unexpectedly called up by a simultaneous appeal from the House. It was, therefore, the more gratifying to receive, soon afterwards, a message from Mr Pitt, expressing a strong desire to make his acquaintance. A meeting was appointed at Lord Mahon's, through whom the message had been conveyed ; and in a conference of two hours, Mr Pitt explained his principles with such frankness and ability, that Mr Sinclair anticipated, with high satisfaction, the young and ardent statesman's advancement to power.

The first object of the Shelburne Ministry was to conclude a general peace. Among the circumstances which appeared to Mr Sinclair likely to impede the negotiation, was the general anxiety to retain possession of Gibraltar. This fortress was regarded as an indisputable evidence of our maritime supremacy, the key of the Mediterranean, a valuable depôt for British merchandise, and a necessary curb to bridle the House

of Bourbon. The place had sustained, but recently, one of the most formidable sieges in the annals of war; and it was contended that a citadel, which British valour had so gloriously preserved, ought not to be surrendered by British diplomacy. No less than five tracts in prose, and one in verse, had at different times been written, urging the retention of this fastness. Mr Fox also had put forth some pithy sentences to the same effect. In reply to these various authorities, Mr Sinclair published "*Impartial Considerations on the Propriety of Retaining Gibraltar.*" He animadverted on the inconsistency of his opponents, eager to give up the largest and most fertile territory ever possessed by a nation, and yet no less eager to retain a barren rock, to which an arbitrary and fictitious value had been unreasonably assigned. He insisted that Gibraltar, in our hands, became a link to bind the House of Bourbon together; and that no peace could be lasting while this constant source of jealousy and ill-will remained. "What," he asked, "would England say to a treaty of peace that surrendered Portsmouth to the Spaniards?" He then remarks upon the uselessness of this naval station, and concludes by denouncing its expensiveness. "If," says he, "the war continues on account of that fortress for only a year, twelve or fifteen millions more must be added to the national debt, and eight or nine hundred thousand per annum to the national taxes."

In reference to this possession, his friend, Dr Adam Smith, remarks to him, in a letter dated 14th October, 1782 :—" The real futility of all dominions, of which the defence is necessarily most expensive, and which contribute nothing either by revenue or military force to the general defence of the empire, and very little even to their own particular defence, is, I think, the subject upon which the public prejudices of Europe require most to be set right. In order to defend the barren rock of Gibraltar (to the possession of which we owe the union of France and Spain, contrary to the natural interests and inveterate prejudices of both countries, the important enmity of Spain, and the futile and expensive friendship of Portugal), we have now left our own coasts defenceless, and sent out a great fleet, to which any considerable disaster may prove fatal to our domestic security, and which, in order to effectuate its purpose, must probably engage a fleet of superior force."

Early in 1783, the preliminary articles of peace with France, Spain, and America were laid before Parliament. These were hotly debated in the Commons, when resolutions condemnatory of the concessions made by the Ministry were proposed by Lord John Cavendish, supported by Mr Fox, who, to the astonishment of Europe, found an ally in Lord North. The debate led to the resignation of the Shelburne Ministry, who were succeeded by the Coalition.

Many of Lord North's oldest and most attached friends deserted him on this occasion. Some of them, and in particular Mr Dundas, in his time Lord Advocate of Scotland, had the honesty to remonstrate against a step involving such abandonment of all former principle. Gibbon, who had been himself a faithful adherent of that Minister, and who was profoundly acquainted with the politics of the time, introduced the subject at Lausanne to a friend of my father. "I know," says he, "that Dundas almost went upon his knees to dissuade his friend and patron from that ruinous alliance."

The chief argument employed by the Shelburne Ministry in vindication of the peace, was the presumed exhaustion of the public finances. The national debt, funded and unfunded, amounted to L.250,000,000, the interest on which was nearly L.9,500,000. The gloomy forebodings of financiers in Parliament were re-echoed out of doors. Pamphlets, in the same mournful tone, had for some time agitated the susceptible nerves of the public. Dr Price laboured, in a lengthened strain, to persuade the nation that it was on the eve of bankruptcy; and the Earl of Stair, to use the phrase of my father, "had for some time distinguished himself by an almost annual offering on the shrine of despondency." The propositions maintained by these and other writers of the same melancholy cast were, "first, that the annual gross income

of the country does not exceed, or will not yield much above twelve millions net yearly ; secondly, that the enormous sum of L.16,371,346, is but scantily sufficient to defray the national expense ; thirdly, that the unfunded debt is at least forty millions, the interest of which will amount to full two millions ; and, fourthly, that to raise additional taxes to the extent of L.4,371,346, were it necessary, is among the barest of all bare possibilities." Nothing could be more ill-timed than these lugubrious vaticinations. The articles of peace had not been ratified. Our enemies might yet be encouraged to renew the war, and our loss of public credit might disable us from raising means for our defence.

Mr Sinclair had made the subject of finance his peculiar study from an early period ; and he had now an opportunity to employ his knowledge in reviving the spirit of his countrymen. In his "Hints on the State of our Finances," he made his first appearance as an author in that department, and this early work ranks amongst the most useful of his numerous writings. The effect of it at that crisis was most salutary both at home and abroad, and more especially in Holland. Although the preliminaries of peace had been agreed upon with the other belligerent powers, it so happened that our negotiations with the Dutch were not so far advanced. Sir Joseph Yorke (afterwards Lord Dover), then ambassador at the Hague, found the "Hints" so valuable an assistance to him

in his diplomatic efforts, that he frequently declared, "It ought to have been printed in letters of gold."

The author sets out with remarking that the inhabitants of Great Britain had, for above a century, been alarming themselves with predictions of their own ruin. "These predictions," says he, "have been falsified by the event; and there is still reason to imagine that as we now ridicule the unfounded despondency of our ancestors, who thought that fifty or a hundred millions would reduce them to a state of bankruptcy; so our posterity will laugh at the folly, the ignorance, or the want of political skill and judgment in the statesmen and politicians of these times, who presume to assert that we have totally exhausted our resources, and that the period is at last arrived when the nation must destroy her debts, or her debts will destroy the nation." He proceeds to produce tables showing that the revenue derived from the property of the country, under the same scale of taxation, had continually increased; and had increased, not only in respect to the old taxes, but also in respect to taxes from time to time additionally imposed. On this first point (the national income), he exposes a false calculation into which the votaries of despondency had been betrayed. He then suggests retrenchments in the various branches of the national expenditure, the navy, the army, the ordinance, and miscellaneous charges. He proves, not only that the unfunded debt was likely to be smaller than his

opponents calculated, but that the public resources were underrated; that even by the unexampled demands of a profuse government the mine of national wealth was not exhausted, and that the springs of life and energy were in full action throughout the same body politic in which certain politicians saw only lifelessness and prostration. He remarks that the usual estimate of the national income in those times, namely 100 millions, was too low; but that, were it actually lower, were it only eighty millions, this sum, at the rate of four shillings in the pound, would yield an income to the state of sixteen millions,—a sum larger than the public service required, even in the opinion of the most pusillanimous alarmist.

The following is the letter of Dr Price to Mr Sinclair, on receiving from him a copy of his tract:—

“ May 1, 1783.

“ Dr Price presents his respectful compliments to Mr Sinclair, and returns him many thanks for the pamphlet which he received this morning, and which he read immediately with much attention. He thinks it written with much judgment and knowledge, as well as the best intentions; and though he cannot see things in the same favourable light that Mr Sinclair does, yet he thinks that he has corrected Lord Stair very justly.\*

\* Lord Stair's pamphlet had produced a great impression upon the public mind, and had reached a third edition.

“ Dr Price wishes for an opportunity to pay his respects to Mr Sinclair.”

The only particulars not sufficiently enlarged upon in this pamphlet were, the low state of public credit, and the scarcity of money. The author, therefore, put forth some further remarks, entitled, “ Memoir, containing a Plan for Re-establishing the Public Credit.” In this short paper he traces the low price of the funds to a variety of temporary causes: to the demand for specie in other countries; to the removal of foreign deposits from our funds; to the deficiency of the last year’s crop; to the unsettled state of Ireland; and to the increase of smuggling. He proceeds to animadvert upon the anomalous character of the sinking fund, which was at first established for paying off the national debt, but which, for a long period, had been continually appropriated to the expenses of the year. “ Instead of a fund so useless and uncertain, let us suppose,” says he, “ that the sum of one million *is invariably applied* for the purpose of diminishing the debt of the nation: that sum, according to Baron Maseres’ ingenious calculation, \* would discharge, in the short space of sixty years, a capital of nearly 317 millions of three per cents at the price of 75 per cent.” The remainder of the tract is employed in explaining and defending his positions, and he then concludes—“ Bad as our state

\* Vol. i. p. 294.



is in regard to revenue, we are indisputably in a better situation than our neighbours. If, therefore, it were possible for us, by carrying such a plan as I have stated into execution, to make the world in general place sufficient confidence in the stability of our public securities, the nation would soon arrive at a higher degree of power and opulence than it can ever boast of at present. All the unoccupied money of the Continent would find its way here; and with an accession of perhaps ten millions of circulating specie, our commerce and manufactures would revive, agriculture would be furnished with the best means of increase and improvement, and every branch of our public revenue would become more efficient and productive."

Two letters from Dr Price, to whom the scheme of a sinking fund is generally ascribed, are now before me. In one, the Doctor says, "I return you many thanks for your Memoir. I have, according to your desire, conveyed to M. Baron Maseres one of the copies you sent me. I have for many years, particularly in my appeal to the public on the national debt, the bank annuities, and the last tract on the finances, been endeavouring to recommend the *restoration* of the sinking fund, its inviolable appropriation, and the consignment of it to commissioners, in order to preserve it from alienation, as the best means of reducing the public debts, and of saving the kingdom from the danger with which they threaten it. I am

very glad to find that you have taken up the subject, and I heartily wish you more success than I have met with."

In his other letter the Doctor, after some remarks upon a sinking fund, and some financial calculations uninteresting to the general reader, demands, "Is it not then to be lamented that such a fund cannot be established, especially considering the other particular advantages which would attend its operations throughout their whole progress? In short, I am firmly of opinion, that if any thing can save the kingdom, it is this must do it. The nature of things does not admit of a more expeditious method of redeeming debts. I cannot help, therefore, wishing that you, sir, and the other able and virtuous members of the House of Commons, would unite in endeavouring to get the fund restored, and such regulations established as may give a sacredness like that of the *ark of God among the Jews, which could not be touched without death*. If this cannot be done, it would be best to strike out the name of the sinking fund from our accounts; for, in its present state, by covering deficiencies and tempting to extravagance, it is more an evil than a benefit. I cannot conclude without assuring you that I honour your abilities and views."

It is singular that the restoration of the sinking fund, a measure suggested at this time by the greatest speculative financiers, proposed in Parliament three years afterwards (1786) by Pitt, approved by Fox,

adopted by acclamation in the House, assented to by the King in person, to mark his own individual approbation, and received with distinguished favour by the whole country, should, by one of those strange mutations to which public opinion is liable, lose all its former popularity, and at last be swept away as a financial fraud and political delusion.

In consequence of these financial publications, Mr Sinclair acquired great influence with the monied interest of the country. He was one day visited by Sir James Esdaile, an intelligent banker of London, anxious to consult him as to the establishment of provincial banks throughout England, where they were at that time but little known. My father explained to him the benefit which the northern division of the island had long derived from well-organized banking arrangements, and encouraged him, so far as circumstances would admit, to introduce the Scottish system into the south. Sir James was thus induced to make a tour through several of the English counties, where he established about twenty branch banks in connexion with his house in the metropolis. This was the first step towards that great extension of the banking system, from which so much of the prosperity and greatness of the British empire has arisen. I shall afterwards have occasion to explain the measures by which these advantages, as Mr Sinclair conceived, might have been secured without the evils which unhappily

attended them of an excessive and insecure circulation.

On the 18th November, 1783, Mr Fox introduced his famous East India Bill, having for its object to secure for himself and his colleagues the patronage of India. The bill passed the Commons, but was rejected by the Lords, chiefly through the personal interference of the King, who embraced the opportunity to dismiss his Ministers, and place Mr Pitt at the head of a new Administration.

The following characteristic letter from Mr Pulteney, with reference to this important transaction, will be interesting to the reader, especially as it contains the opinion of the celebrated De Lolme, not merely upon general principles, but on the application of them to a particular measure :—

“ London, Dec. 24, 1783.

“ Dear Sinclair,

“ What you suggested to me in the House, came into my head when I had finished my business this evening, and I think it would be a politic measure, because it might operate as a means of making my pamphlet more generally attended to, which is of the last importance at this time ; for you may depend upon it, that the Foxites will never give up their plan, unless fairly drove from it by the general detestation of the people at large. I have got a letter from De

Lolme, which is much to the purpose. He agrees entirely with my idea, and I have letters from various quarters, informing me that they had no knowledge of the danger of the bill till they read my paper.

“ An honorary, unsolicited mark of approbation, bestowed on account of disinterested and important conduct, is what I think I may receive, without deviating from my public line; though, if it be expected to warp me in the least, it will fail of its effects.—I am, dear Sinclair, your most obedient servant,

“ WILLIAM PULTENEY.”

In the arduous struggle of the young Minister against a majority in the House of Commons, exasperated by defeat at the very moment when they felt sure of a decisive triumph, the Member for Caithness gave him his most cordial support. The importance of my father's services on this occasion appears from the two following letters, one from Mr Pitt himself, the other from his confidential friend, J. J. Hamilton, Esq. (afterwards Marquis of Abercorn) :—

“ My dear Sir,

“ I find the enemy circulating, that I said in my speech I would resign, in case of an Address being carried. I take for granted, they think this impression would help them in the division, if they move it, on Monday. The fact is, as I recollect, that I said nothing one way or other on that supposition, but

challenged them either to *impeach* or address, if they were dissatisfied with my reasons for remaining after the resolutions. You will, I am sure, forgive my troubling you with this, for your *private use*, if you think it worth while to take any way of counteracting this idea. Perhaps you may have some opportunity to see how it is understood to-day.—I am, dear Sir, your faithful and obedient servant,

W. PITT.

“ Saturday, Jan. 31, five o'clock.”

“ Dear Sir,

“ I am just come from Pitt, who is much obliged to you for your friendly support and assistance. We agree that Mr Luttrell's appearance in his favour on Monday will be a very desirable circumstance. There will probably be a division, but, at all events, the presence of independent and respectable friends will be in the highest degree desirable.—I am, dear Sir, in haste, but with real respect and regard, your most obedient and faithful servant,

J. J. HAMILTON.

“ Five o'clock.”

To these letters I may subjoin a short extract from another, written by Colonel Pennington, M.P., who appears to have been a member of the St Alban's Club :—“ If you can pique Mr Pitt not to desert the vessel timidly and interestedly at the very moment she

is about to strike, you will deserve infinite merit from your injured ruined country."

This unprecedented struggle between a first Minister of the Crown and a majority in the House of Commons, was terminated by a dissolution of Parliament on the 24th of March, 1784. As the rule already mentioned of alternate representation prevented Caithness from returning a Member to the next Parliament, Mr Sinclair was obliged to look out for a new seat.

Having some influence in the northern burghs, he commenced a canvass amongst them, but, as the issue was uncertain, secured, in the mean time, his return for the Cornish borough of Lestwithiel. The day of election at Kirkwall, on this occasion the returning burgh of the northern district, was considerably later than that of any town in England—a circumstance which led to the appearance of a very unexpected opponent. At the election for Westminster, Mr Fox, Lord Hood, and Sir Cecil Wray, had stood a contest severe beyond example, even on that arena of electioneering warfare.\* The poll was open from the

\* "It is hardly to be credited the exertions that were made to secure Mr Fox's election for Westminster, and the popular spirit that was raised for his support. A friend of mine, Lord Grimstone, who, being only an Irish Peer, was entitled to vote, went in his carriage to support Sir Cecil Wray. When he returned to his carriage, his coachman said to him, 'I hope your Lordship will now allow me to poll.'—'Certainly,' said Lord Grimstone, 'and for whom are you to vote?'—'Why, for Mr

1st of April to the 17th of May, when it was closed by the High Bailiff, who conceived that he had no right to protract the voting beyond the day on which the writs were made returnable. Lord Hood was at the head of the poll, and Mr Fox had a majority of 235 over Sir Cecil Wray; but, as many of Mr Fox's votes were suspected to be illegal, Sir Cecil demanded a scrutiny, which the returning officer was induced to grant. While this scrutiny was pending, no return for Westminster could be made; and as by this time all the seats in England were pre-occupied, Mr Fox had no alternative but to procure, if possible, through the influence of his friend Mr Thomas Dundas, his election for the northern burghs.\* The Dundas influence prevailed, but if my father could have proved (what he had little doubt was the case) that his opponent was ineligible, he himself, of necessity, became entitled to the seat. Here, however, Mr Sinclair's characteristic generosity prevailed. Attached as he was to Mr Pitt, he declined to gratify the Minister on this occasion. He considered the scrutiny a vindictive measure, designed merely to involve Mr Fox in

Fox, to be sure, my Lord.'—To which Lord Grimstone very good-naturedly replied, 'I wish, John, that you had told me sooner, and we might then have paired off.'"—*Correspondence*, p. 95, vol. i.

\* Mr Fox's flight to the Orkneys was the subject of an amusing caricature by Gilray, who represents the English orator in a philabeg, haranguing the citizens of Kirkwall on the blessings of liberty and cheap government.



ruinous expenses, and to keep him out of Parliament. He deferred, therefore, presenting his petition till the scrutiny should be over. His conduct was much eulogized by the Opposition at the time ; but, no sooner was their leader seated for Westminster, than they dropped their former tone of panegyric, and never afterwards did justice to a disinterestedness seldom exemplified in the practice of politicians.

Having lost his election for the Northern Burghs, Mr Sinclair took his seat for Lestwithiel. He was preparing afterwards to surprise his constituents, by going in person to return them thanks, but was given to understand that such a step would excite jealousy in the patron of the borough. It happened, however, that some members of the corporation visited the metropolis, and took the opportunity of waiting upon their member. They expressed their satisfaction, that so popular an author, even from the farthest corner of the North, had been recommended to them by their patron. One of them, a little man, contemplating my father's tall figure, added, that they were glad to be able to *look up* to their representative. " I assure you," answered Mr Sinclair, " I never shall *look down* on my constituents."

I have already mentioned two financial works published by my father. The success of these encouraged him to undertake the arduous task of writing a " History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire." His object was to trace the public revenue

and expenditure of England from the remotest periods down to his own times ; subjoining a similar enquiry into the revenue of Scotland and Ireland, together with an analytical view of public revenue in general. No financial work, on a scale so comprehensive, had been ever before attempted in any country ; and in the case of Great Britain, from the complicated state of her finances, no ordinary patience, acuteness, and perseverance, would be necessary to investigate their origin, and to explain their details. These difficulties, however, instead of discouraging, only proved incitements to his industrious and energetic mind. He left no source of information, ancient or modern, foreign or domestic, unexplored. His list of authorities, including historians, antiquaries, financiers, biographers, and economists, amounts to 713, from the huge folios of Marckgraff and Postlethwaite, which nobody thinks of reading, down to those small ephemeral pamphlets, which few readers take the trouble of preserving.

To show the importance of right ideas on the subject of public revenue, the author begins by describing the connexion between the revenues and the power of a state, and by showing the national weakness which results, when taxes are either excessive in their amount, or partial in their distribution. He remarks, that war in our days is as much a contest of treasure as of arms, and that unhappily the great financial discovery of modern times, namely, the fund-

ing system, has been abused into the means of making posterity pay indefinitely for the ambition and improvidence of their ancestors. This system, he observes, had been carried further in Great Britain than in any other country ; and he concludes, that although the state could still bear the burden laid upon it, yet additional incumbrances might be so recklessly accumulated, as to force upon the nation the alternative of infamy or of ruin.

He fixes upon the Revolution in 1688 as the great financial era which introduced a complete change into the management of our public revenue. The expenses of the government, before that period, had chiefly been defrayed by the receipts from crown-lands, and ordinary fiscal resources. An extraordinary tax was seldom imposed, and imposed only as a temporary grant, for a few years or for life, to the reigning monarch. He compares the state, since that epoch, to a great corporation, extending its views beyond the exigencies of the moment, forming plans of remote as well as of immediate profit, and borrowing funds to acquire, cultivate, or defend distant colonies, in hopes of reaping ultimate advantage in full proportion to the outlay. " At one time," he says, " it protects a nation whose trade it considers as beneficial, at another it engages in a war, lest the commerce of a neighbour and a rival should be too great ; in short, it proposes to itself a plan of perpetual accumulation and aggrandizement, which, according as it

is well or ill conducted, must either end in the possession of an extensive and a powerful empire, or in total ruin."

Mr Sinclair contemplated heavy or unequal taxation as among the most grievous evils by which a people could be oppressed. "Their industry," he says, "diminishes, their wealth necessarily disappears, their number decreases, and the greater the occasion they have for their resources, the fewer they will actually enjoy." He considered the lavish expenditure of Great Britain since the establishment of her liberties as one of the worst features of her policy; and traces with regret the gradual increase of the national debt from the small sum of L.664,263, with which the country was burdened under James II., to the vast aggregate of L.247,833,236, for which the nation was responsible at the close of the American war.

It would be out of place to give more than a general view of this elaborate performance. To trace the various sources of revenue under each sovereign, and to enumerate the taxes levied, and the produce of each, would be to transcribe three volumes. Suffice it to say, that the work was received with distinguished favour by the public; passed through three editions; and became a text-book for students of political economy, both at home and in foreign countries. Many persons, whose names have since be-

come eminent in political history, derived the elements of their financial knowledge from my father's pages. Some of my readers will feel a melancholy interest in learning, that, amidst other preparatory studies for the highest station in this empire, the late lamented Princess Charlotte of Wales studied the "History of the Public Revenue" with great attention and satisfaction. Sir John Macpherson, in a letter to my father, mentions that she "left memoranda relative to several of Sir John Sinclair's financial works, in the regular journal which she wrote with extracts from the books which she had perused.\* The Rev. Dr Gregory communicates a fact of a similar kind.† "It is many years ago," says he, "since, in company with the present Prime Minister of Russia, I read attentively the whole of your elaborate work on the Revenue of Great Britain, and can say with truth, that I never read a work so clear and so complete. I have not a doubt but that the extraordinary young man I have alluded to, experiences at this moment great benefit from the attention he then bestowed upon it." The American Minister, Mr Rush, in the narration of his residence at the Court of London,‡ after having mentioned that Mr Coke of Norfolk

\* Sir John Macpherson advises my father to call at Porter's the bookseller in Pall-Mall, where the journals were binding, and where, on mentioning his name, they would be shown to him.

† Letter, dated West Ham, Essex, Feb. 21, 1805.

‡ P. 285, printed in 1833.

considered Sir John Sinclair's Code of Agriculture as the most useful work upon that subject, has the following passage respecting the History of the Revenue :—" In a conversation with Mr Vansittart, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, I asked him what work was regarded as containing the best account of the British finances. He said it was difficult to arrive at a knowledge of them from any single work ; but, on the whole, he considered Sir John Sinclair's, for the period it embraced, as the most satisfactory. These," he adds, " are high testimonials."

Mr Ewart, one of our ablest foreign Ministers, in a letter, dated Berlin, 1st March, 1788, writes thus :—" I am impatient to see the second volume of your History of the Finances of Great Britain, whose actual flourishing state must furnish you with such important proofs of the principles you so long ago advanced respecting the favourable prospects of her resources and revenue. How peculiarly prosperous is our situation in this as well as in every other respect, when compared with that of our rival ; and while our Administration has gained the respect of all Europe, and rises in estimation, the French Cabinet continue to expose their weakness, inconsistency, and misconduct." Necker bestowed the highest praise on this work. Mirabeau informed the author that he proposed translating it into French. The Abbé Morellet eulogized it warmly. Marniere of Ham-  
burgh also, in his " Essay on Commercial Credit," has

these words :—“ Son ouvrage forme sans contredit le plus grand recueil de faits interessans sur les finances qui existe en Europe.” The same great financial authority adds ;—“ L’histoire du revenue public de la Grande Bretagne est trop connue pour que je m’arrête à en faire l’éloge ; je me contenterai de dire qu’elle donne le detail de toutes les operations de finances, que la nation de l’Europe qui a su procurer à l’état le plus grand revenue et le plus grand credit, a faites depuis une siècle ; et que l’auteur en montre les avantages ou les inconveniens par des observations dont la sagesse et la sagacité justifient sa grande reputation.”

In the course of this work, Mr Sinclair introduces an interesting comparison between the resources of Great Britain and France ; depicting in strong colours the embarrassment of the latter country, and the impossibility of raising its revenues to a level with the exigencies of its government. He points out an annual defect of ten millions of livres in the national income ; and remarks on the anomalous fact, that an arbitrary king, though invested with uncontrolled authority over the property, persons, and lives of his subjects, is himself subject to one insurmountable limitation, being unable, with safety, to impose a new tax. My father much doubted the stability of the French monarchy ; and, in the following passage, might be said prophetically to anticipate the approaching revolutionary convulsions. “ The Court of France,

like every other arbitrary administration, is nothing but a faction confederated together for the government of that great and powerful kingdom; and this faction is upheld, and receives perpetual accessions, from the hopes that every individual belonging to it entertains of having some share in the plunder of the nation. But if ever those hopes are destroyed—if frugality is ever carried to any extreme—if all expectations of sharing in the spoils of the public are annihilated, the power of the faction would quickly cease, and a revolution would be the necessary consequence.”

“ Besides, such has been the impolitic conduct of the French Cabinet, in supporting the independence of North America, in suffering the natives of that country to spread their wild ideas of republicanism throughout every corner of the kingdom; and, indeed so much have the bold compositions written in this country, in favour of liberty and the legal rights of mankind, been circulated there, that the seeds of important political changes seem to be sown, which greater restrictions on the royal bounty would have a tendency to accelerate.”

Very different were my father's anticipations with respect to the prospects of his own country. In his appendix he introduces an amusing article, entitled, “ an antidote to despondency, or progressive opinions from respectable authority, tending to prove that the nation was actually undone prior to the Revo-



lution in 1688, and that it has remained in a continued state of ruin or decay ever since that memorable era." There are twenty-one authorities, each, as a prophet of plagues, rivalling or surpassing his predecessor. "A kind of common consumption hath crowded upon us," says the author of *Britannia Languens* in 1680. "No new improving manufacture is to be heard of in England, but that of periwigs," says the writer of a discourse on the growth of England in 1689. "By this revolution we have brought on the utter beggary of ourselves, by the decay of traffick, and unsupportable taxes. England must pay the piper," says Sir R. W. in 1694. "We have upon us all the visible marks of a declining people," says Dr Davenant in 1699. "We are almost driven to the very brink of destruction," says the writer of a letter touching the embezzlement of the kingdom's treasure in 1710. "By mismanagement or villany we are reduced to a terrible ebb," says J. Gordon in 1722. "Infinite swarms of locusts and caterpillars in office not only prey on the vitals of industry, but render even our liberties precarious," says the *Craftsman* in 1736. "We have now reached the goal of national ruin," says David Hume in 1776. "The state is a bankrupt, and those who have trusted their all to the national faith are in danger of becoming (I die pronouncing it) beggars," says John Earl of Stair in 1783. I am unwilling to overwhelm the reader with the equally doleful views and anticipations of Smith,

Kames, Price, and others on the list of mourners. Great Britain, however, survived ; and my father was convinced that similar predictions made by his contemporaries of her prospective decay would be similarly falsified by her future prosperity.

I shall conclude this account of the history of the revenue, with the following singular letter from Lord Hailes, in which his Lordship justly guards against the error of estimating the value of a division of the kingdom by the amount of its contributions to the public revenue.

“ Sir,

“ I was favoured with a copy of your book just at the sitting down of the Session, when my avocations prevented me from taking notice of any thing foreign to them.

“ Your plan is great, and it will require all your abilities, knowledge, and perseverance to complete it.

“ In the course of your work, might I adventure to give any hint to one so much better informed than I am, all *minutiæ* of shillings and pence ought to be omitted : to give a notion of taxes, produce, &c. odd hundreds serve no purpose. Raynal, by his fractional accuracy, makes the ignorant wonder at him, but does not add to their knowledge.

“ It seems to me, that your intended supplement as to Scotland and Ireland, will rather hurt than benefit your work. Could you ascertain *the value of a*

*man given to the state for military service*, you might show what those poor and brave nations contributed to the public ; without this, the English vulgar, that is, ninety-nine out of a hundred, will try their importance by the *rule of three* ; the result will be arithmetically right, but politically wrong beyond calculation. —I am, Sir, with great regard, your most obedient humble servant,

DAVID DALRYMPLE.

“ Newhailes, 26th Aug. 1785.”

This year (1785) my father sustained a severe family affliction in the death of Mrs Sinclair, to whom he was most affectionately attached, and in whose society he had enjoyed uninterruptedly the happiness of domestic life. She left two daughters, Hannah, authoress of a popular work on the principles of the Christian faith ; and Janet, married to the late Sir James Colquhoun, of Luss, Baronet.

Mr Sinclair felt the loss so severely, that he at first proposed retiring altogether from public life, and addressed a letter upon the subject to the Premier, to which Mr Pitt returned the following considerate and amiable reply.

“ Downing Street, May 17, 1785.

“ My dear Sir,

“ I feel very sensibly the kind proof of your zeal

and friendship at such a moment, and truly lament the unfortunate cause which deprives us at present of your assistance. As far as numbers are in question, a single vote, though always of some consequence, is, I trust, not now so material as once seemed possible. I am not, however, the less thankful to you for the accommodation you propose, though very glad to think it unnecessary.—Believe me, my dear Sir, yours very sincerely,

“ W. PITT.”

In the month of October my father went down to Brighton, where Mr Pitt happened at that time to be residing, and was received by the Minister and his friends with great sympathy and kindness. In a letter to Lady Janet Sinclair, he says, that in case he continued in Parliament he was promised office; “but,” adds he, “I have it still in view to retire. Mr Pitt paid me many compliments on the success of my literary labours.”

In the month of December Mr Sinclair, by a short excursion to the Continent, endeavoured to remove or mitigate the depression under which he laboured. He set out accordingly for Paris, during the Christmas recess. He was fortunate enough to travel in company with some ingenious persons, among whom was Montgolfier, the inventor of balloons. Montgolfier stated, that his invention had been suggested

to him by the discoveries of Dr Black, showing the difference in point of weight between various gases.

At Paris my father dined *en famille* with Necker, then Prime Minister. The ladies of the family seemed to have resolved on giving their Scottish guest an agreeable reception. He found Madame Necker reading Blair's Sermons, and Mademoiselle Necker, afterwards the celebrated De Staël, playing "Lochaber no more" on the piano.

He was also frequently in company with Buffon, at this time betraying somewhat of senile garrulity, but not to a disagreeable excess. The great naturalist did justice to the taste and science of England. "Milton," he said, "was the greatest of all poets; "and the Newtonian theory must last for ever." He presented my father with his picture, a compliment which the latter highly estimated.

At Paris the traveller procured information upon two subjects of public interest. The first had reference to the improved machinery invented by Mr Droz of Switzerland, and at that time unknown in England. He prevailed on the inventor to make Mr Boulton of Birmingham acquainted with his plans; and was thus the means of introducing a superior coinage into the British mint.

The other discovery was still more valuable. Having become intimate with M. Clouet, director of the royal establishment for making gunpowder at Paris, he induced him to explain some very important pro-

cesses recently discovered in the manufacture of that article.\*

On his return to England, Mr Sinclair, whose domestic affliction does not appear to have abated his desire of public usefulness, being anxious to introduce the last named improvement, entered into communication with the Duke of Richmond, then Master-General of the Ordnance. He stated the process confidentially to his friend Bishop Watson, Professor of Chemistry at Cambridge, requesting his company at the Board of Ordnance, that he might explain scientifically the nature of the process. The Bishop, not being acquainted with the Duke, at first declined. Mr Sinclair, however, undertook to apprise his Grace of their visit. The new process being found to answer, was adopted by the Government.

It is curious that Bishop Watson in his Memoirs, giving a grave account of this transaction, omits my father's name entirely, and claims all the merit to himself. This was not fair. His estimate, however, of the importance of the information thus communicated is worth transcribing. Having mentioned that

\* The process was to make charcoal by distilling the wood in close cylinders. From experiments made by Major (afterwards Sir William Congreve), it appears, that the cylinder powder threw out a ball of 68 pounds weight 273 feet, while the same mortar, at an equal elevation, and charged with an equal weight of ordinary gunpowder, threw a ball of the same weight only 172 feet. In this experiment the strength of the cylinder powder, estimated by the horizontal range, was to that of the best ordinary powder as 100 to 63.

the saving to the country effected by this discovery amounted to L.100,000 per annum, he proceeds,—“ I have never enquired whether this information is correct, nor, if it should turn out to be so, have I any intention of applying for a reward. My country is welcome to my services in every way ; but if, in the vicissitudes incident to all families, my posterity should by misfortune, not occasioned by vice or indiscretion, be reduced to beggary, I would advise them to petition the House of Commons for a remuneration. They may do it with a just confidence of being listened to.” \*

Willing to put the most favourable construction on the proceedings of the right reverend chemist, my father attributed his mistatement to forgetfulness of the actual facts of the case, when he wrote the anecdotes of his life. My father might have taken any

\* Anecdotes of Bishop Watson's Life by himself, p. 149. Various documents from M. Clouet as to gunpowder and saltpetre, dated 1785, are now before me. The following note from Major Congreve is curious in relation to this topic :—

“ Major Congreve's compliments to Sir John Sinclair, and informs him that he has this day sent a sample of English saltpetre (refined upon Dr George Fordyce's principles) for a comparative trial with the French samples. Major C. sent the English samples to his Grace the Duke of Richmond, upon a supposition that his Grace would send them to Sir John.

“ *Charlton, Thursday morning, 25th May, 1786.*

“ P.S.—I am to set out for the Royal Powder Mills at Feversham to-morrow morning, and shall be happy to be honoured with any commands from my Lord Bishop of Llandaff.”

other eminent man of science to the Board of Ordinance, but preferred the Bishop of Llandaff, in the hope of modifying that unfriendly relation in which he stood to the ministers of that day.

It was not long after this transaction that Mr Pitt, in addition to former marks of esteem, procured for his friend and supporter the honour of a Baronetcy. Some negotiations had been going on upon the subject, but had been impeded by the request of Mr Sinclair that the patent should include the male posterity of his daughters, as he had at that time no son. There were scarcely any precedents for this peculiarity. Nothing but the great desire of the Minister to oblige a valuable partisan could have induced him to depart from ordinary usage. The following letter is among the few documents I find in reference to this transaction.

“ Putney Heath, Nov. 2, 1784.

“ My dear Sir,

“ The rambling life I have led in my holidays, with some occasional mixture of business, made me defer writing to you from day to day. At last, as is too often the case, I have grown almost too much ashamed of my omission to correct it; but as I find you are still fixed at a distance, I cannot any longer defer thanking you for your letters. I shall with great pleasure contribute every assistance in my power, if circumstances will admit of the limitation you wish of



the title of Baronet ; and I shall be happy to converse with you upon it when we meet, which I hope will be before long. I wish much to know your present speculations on our finance. Our prospects of it improve. Most of the particulars you mention in one of your letters may, I hope, be easily ascertained. While we are thinking of improving the moments of peace, the state of the Continent is growing every day more uncertain. I am, dear sir, your most faithful and obedient servant,

“ W. PITT.”

## CHAPTER III.

Remarks on Travelling—Denmark—Count Bernstorff—Professor Thorkelin—Sweden—Gustavus—Russia—Empress Catherine—Princess Daschkow—Grand Duke Paul—Moscow—Count Romanzoff—Poland—Stanislaus—Tepper the Banker—Austria—Emperor Joseph—Prussia—Frederic William—Prince Harry—Mirabeau—Hanover—Duke of York—Holland—French Intrigues—Flanders—George III.—Lord Chancellor Thurlow—Presidents Washington and Jefferson.

SIR JOHN SINCLAIR considered an acquaintance with foreign countries obtained by personal observation, indispensable to the proficiency of a British statesman. He was shocked to observe that many gentlemen of political eminence could hardly read French ; and that few of them could speak it fluently. Even those who went abroad did not, he conceived, turn to account the opportunities of observation afforded them. He describes, in his journal, a noble Lord, on his arrival at Berlin, thanking God that he had reached a town where there was nothing to be seen—no pictures, no library, no museum ; and a Baronet at Vienna expressing horror at the thought of dining with the people of the countries he visited.

“Would to heavens,” exclaimed the fashionable tourist, “that I was in a place where there were no natives!” This foolish speech, to my father’s indignation, was often repeated in his hearing as being full of wit and cleverness. He lamented that Mr Pitt had never been abroad, and was therefore imperfectly acquainted with the policy and intrigues of foreign courts. Hence the ill success of all his schemes for uniting the continental powers in permanent coalition.

Having been obliged to shorten his last excursion, Sir John resolved to make his next tour more extensive, and to take advantage of the Parliamentary recess in 1786 for that purpose. Before setting out he communicated his intention to Mr Pitt, and received from him the following reply :—

“Hollwood Hill, May 29th, 1786.

“Dear Sir,

“I regret much that I lose the pleasure of seeing you before your departure. I heartily wish you a great deal of entertainment, and a great deal of information, which, I believe, is more your object, and in which I am happy to consider myself as so much interested. You may always depend on my services, on any occasion where I am at liberty, and where they can be of any use to you. The revenue papers shall be got for you, if possible. I shall be happy to

hear from you whenever you are at leisure. Believe me, with great truth and regard,

“ Dear Sir,  
“ Yours most sincerely,  
“ W. PITT.”

Before his departure, my father had so distinctly marked out his route, that he not only fixed the places he was to visit, but determined the very day of his arrival at each. Having provided himself with above a hundred letters of introduction, he departed from Gravesend on the 30th day of May.\* He set out with an impression, which every traveller ought to cultivate, that in all countries a man of sense will discover something useful; that no country is without something in its climate or soil, its manners or constitution, worthy of attention; that the traveller should consider himself as a child, entitled to ask any question for the purpose of acquiring knowledge; that regarding himself in some measure as the representative of his native land, he should never forfeit self-respect, but should act towards foreigners with liberality and spirit, even suffering himself to be cheated, as tourists usually are, with as good a grace as possible; and above all, not disgracing himself with mean vices:

\* The following paragraph appeared in the Edinburgh Evening Courant of the 5th of June:—"London, Thursday, June 1st. Yesterday morning Sir John Sinclair set off from the India office, Whitehall, in the capacity of commercial negotiator to the northern courts on the continent."

that in his progress he should omit no opportunity of procuring specimens of foreign workmanship for the improvement of manufactures at home ; and finally, that he should discover, if possible, every secret, mechanical or scientific, which gives superiority to its possessor, whether in processes of philosophical experiment, or in works of useful industry.

During his passage from Gravesend to Gottenburgh, our zealous and patriotic traveller drew up, under the several heads of agriculture, commerce, government, revenue, military and naval force, &c. a series of questions, amounting to some hundreds, respecting the countries he proposed to visit. His intention was not to rest satisfied in any instance without personally investigating each of these particulars. He landed at Gottenburgh on the 16th of June, and on the 22d reached Copenhagen, by way of Elsinore. As the state of Northern Europe above fifty years ago might not now be very interesting to the general reader, I shall go over the ground with rapidity, omitting for the most part all minute description of natural scenery or buildings, and confining my task to characteristic notices of individuals, or of nations, which, as developements of human nature, must be equally interesting at all times.

As no Court was held during Sir John's stay at Copenhagen, he had no opportunity of being presented to the Danish Royal Family. This he particularly regretted afterwards, as Frederick the Prince

Royal, when King of Denmark, caused the "Code of Agriculture" to be translated into Danish, at the public expense. Sir John visited Count Bernstorff, at his magnificent castle, near the metropolis; and formed a friendship with him which extended to another generation; for I find in a letter, dated 1800, the then young Count expressing the hope that Sir John Sinclair would continue to the son the same regard which he had manifested towards the father. My father considered Count Bernstorff an able and active Minister, who would keep the envoys from his Court continually on the alert. Among other acquaintances formed in Denmark was Professor Thorkelin, a native of Ireland, whose exertions had contributed largely towards reviving the literary character of that country. Among several letters from the Professor, I see one in which he mentions "The Statistical account of Scotland" as having given rise to a new society in Norway, who united themselves in order to make the existing state of that long-forgotten kingdom publicly known. In another communication he makes interesting reference to the antiquities of Scotland. "I have searched for papers in his Majesty's archives relative to the unfortunate death of King Henry; the affairs of the beautiful Queen of Scots; and the accusations against the Earl of Bothwell. At length I have been so fortunate as to collect a vast number of state papers concerning this business. Among those is a judicial

inquisition over the Earl, made in Bergen; and the correspondence of the French Ministers, the learned Dancée, or Danceus, is most interesting. It will be proved by this that the French King, through his interest in this Court, prevented the Earl being delivered into the hands of his enemies. There are likewise many letters authentic from the Regents and nobility in Scotland."

My father lamented the despotism established in Denmark, and ascribed to loss of liberty the degeneracy and political insignificance of that people. "The nobles," he says, "are luxurious, the commons idle, and the peasants slaves. At the same time, there exists among the Danes all the conscious pride of ancient glory. They are jealous of their country's honour; they cannot hear the least reflection upon it, and in particular are anxious to be thought a braver, richer, more polite and learned people, than their neighbours the Swedes; a comparison of the two nations, to the disadvantage of the latter, is, to a Danish ear, the most agreeable of all topics. The two nations hate each other; but the Danes are more inveterate." He was of opinion that the Danes would act wisely in diminishing the number of their holidays. "About St John's Day, in particular," he says (24th of June), "the people are idle for three weeks."

Having resolved to see the whole north of Europe in the course of about seven months, our traveller soon completed his enquiries regarding Denmark;

and we find him suddenly at Stockholm on the 11th of July, employing himself with indefatigable industry, in visiting whatever was most interesting in that capital and its vicinity.

On the 22d, being the Queen's "name day," a court festival was held at the country palace of Dronningholm, on which occasion he was presented to King Gustavus; and in the evening attended the royal party to the French opera. The performance was Molière's "Malade Imaginaire," and tolerably acted. He was much disgusted, however, with some absurdities and indecencies, very inappropriate in a piece performed in honour of a queen. He wished that some of the apparatus employed in clinical surgery had been less prominent on the stage. After this singular representation, which was over at an early hour, the King and royal family supped in public. During the entertainment, his Majesty called up to him in succession the Foreign Ministers and strangers at the Court. The Chevalier Sinclair was summoned among the former, being named after the Dutch, and before the Spanish envoy. The King enquired the particulars of his journey, adding, "I have a great regard for Scotland; many of the first families in my kingdom came originally from your country. Three of your own name are Barons of Sweden." \*

\* My father, after he returned to England from this tour, carried on a correspondence for nine years with Baron Sinclair, who requested assistance towards establishing his pedigree, as



His Majesty afterwards observed, that Dunall (or M'Dowall), whom at the last diet he had appointed Landt Marechal, was of Scotch extraction. The King might have mentioned that Baron Fersen (properly M'Pherson) held the same office at two of the preceding diets. The number of Swedish noblemen, descended from Scottish ancestors, is estimated at above fifty. They are chiefly descendants of Scottish officers, who served with distinction under the great Gustavus Adolphus during his German campaigns.

Turning to Sir Thomas Wroughton, at that time our Minister at the Swedish Court, the King enquired, whether the Chevalier Sinclair supported the Administration of Mr Pitt. Being answered in the affirmative, he expressed his satisfaction, adding, with some emotion,—“ I am not fond of those who are perpetually wrangling with their Sovereign and disturbing the peace and tranquillity of the country.” Gustavus, educated in despotic principles, did not understand the constitutional opposition which, without endangering the prerogatives of the Crown, may be offered in a free state to the Ministry of the day.

a preliminary to claiming the title and estates of the Lords Sinclair. During this long epistolary intercourse, the formal appellations of “ Sir,” and “ My Lord,” were changed into “ My dear Cousin,” and “ My much-esteemed Kinsman.” It may be added, that one of Sir John's own ancestors, John of Brims, has been already mentioned in my introductory chapter, as having served in the Swedish campaigns in Germany.

The King with great civility declared, that if the Chevalier had remained longer in Sweden, he would have endeavoured to make his stay as agreeable as possible. Among other questions which Gustavus put to Sir Thomas Wroughton, was the somewhat strange and abrupt interrogation,—“ When shall we have another maritime war? We long much for one in Sweden.” It hence appears that his Majesty, though not well acquainted with the British constitution, sufficiently understood the advantages to a neutral power of trading between belligerents.

The display of royal luxury at this banquet was so adapted to fascinate even a philosopher, that my father observed to a Swiss savant, M. Trembley, who stood near him,—“ Is it to be wondered at that such scenes should turn the heads of most men?” Trembley would not have assented to this remark had he been allowed to lift the veil of futurity; but would have answered, with Solon—“ Wait, till you see the end;” for within six years Gustavus was assassinated.†

Sumptuous, however, as this banquet was, I find that, as far as regarded the Foreign Ministers and their

\* A Swedish merchant very honestly confessed that he was *ashamed* of the money he had made during that golden era (as he termed it), the American war.

† My father long continued to correspond with Trembley, who, in 1793, writes to him:—“ My country is overrun by the French, and nothing now remains for me but to turn school-master, and see whether I cannot live as well as Dionysius the Tyrant did at Corinth.”

friends, the sense of sight only was regaled; for it seems they afterwards adjourned to the Countess of Piper's, where a substantial entertainment awaited them. From the house of this lady they did not take their departure till so late, or rather so early an hour, that it was two in the morning before they reached their homes.

Sir John afterwards dined with the Russian Minister, M. de Marcoff; the entertainment was sumptuous; the whole *corps diplomatique*, together with all the foreigners in the capital, were present. The conversation having turned on the Baronet's intended voyage across the Baltic, some one asked whether he was ever sea-sick. "The English never are," said the French ambassador, the Marquis de Pons, in complimentary allusion to the maritime enterprise of England. Notwithstanding this clever *impromptu*, M. de Pons was not considered by my father a man of much ability; and he thence inferred that France took no great interest at that time in the politics of Sweden. The contrast between the Marquis and his host was striking. Marcoff was a true Russian patriot, a man of great ability, affable manners, and profound knowledge of European politics.

During his stay at Stockholm, Sir John made a journey to Upsala, and visited the University, in company with the professor of anatomy, Dr Murray, a gentleman of Scottish extraction. "Here," he says, "I trod with emotion the small botanic garden ho-

noured with the footsteps of Linnæus." He returned the same day to the capital, after having accomplished, to the credit of Swedish posting, a journey of one hundred miles within four-and-twenty hours.

At Stockholm, our indefatigable traveller visited the Exchange, where, in order to perpetuate a politic horror of Danish rule, an old house is kept up, in the corner of which might be seen a cannon-ball, fired, as was alleged, at Christian IV. of Denmark, while glutting his eyes from the adjoining window with the massacre of the Swedish nobility. At the new arsenal (the old one, to the scandal of a military people, was then filled with opera dresses), Sir John saw the bloody garments of Gustavus Adolphus and Charles XII., and convinced himself, after much enquiry, that the latter was not killed by a pistol-shot from one of his own soldiers, but by a cannon-ball of the enemy. The mask taken from his face after death, shows that all the bones in front of the head were shattered; and, in a golden box at the Treasury, the fatal ball was still preserved, which produced so great a change on the politics of Europe.

My father was much surprised, and in some degree disgusted with the subserviency of the Swedes to France. Not only did they adopt French politics, but French customs and phraseology; and speaking of the Crown Prince, would call him "Notre Dauphin." Some Frenchmen with more vivacity than prudence, alleged that France held Sweden and

Turkey like a brace of bull-dogs, ready to be let loose at pleasure upon her enemies. Sir John was of opinion that Denmark and Sweden were kingdoms on too small a scale, in proportion to the magnitude of the neighbouring powers; and that neither of the two, was likely to enjoy security, till by treaty or conquest they should become united. Both states, he conceived, maintained establishments out of all proportion to their ways and means.

After a boisterous passage of seven days, during which, contrary to the polite anticipations of M. de Pons, the voyager suffered much from sea-sickness, he arrived on the first of August at Riga; where he received much attention from the Count de Browne, Governor-General of Livonia. The history of this nobleman is singular. He was of Irish extraction, and came to Russia without a shilling. In early life he was taken prisoner by the Turks, who sold him for a slave. He was redeemed by the interference of the French Ambassador at the Ottoman Court; and on the recovery of his liberty, having returned to the Russian service, rose to a high rank, and amassed a considerable fortune. On his marriage to a second wife, to prevent dissatisfaction in the children of the first, he divided his entire property among them, and began to make a second fortune. He was understood to have acquired at the time of Sir John's visit, six thousand a-year in land, and a hundred thousand pounds in money; which, in order to have

his choice of the best mortgages, he lent at five per cent, being one per cent below the ordinary interest. Speaking of the three nations that compose the British empire, the Count remarked: "I have seen many English fools, and many Irish come out of their respective countries, but never yet one fool from Scotland." In illustration of Scottish sagacity, Count Browne related a curious anecdote of one Grant, a Scotsman in the service of the great Frederick of Prussia. Grant was observed one day fondling the King's favourite dog. "Are you fond of dogs?" said Frederick. "No, please your Majesty," replied Grant, "but we Scots have a saying that it is right to secure a friend at Court." "You are a sly fellow," said the monarch; "recollect for the future that you have no occasion at this court for any friend but myself." Grant rose afterwards with great rapidity, and was intrusted with the command of the most important fortresses in the kingdom. Sir John lamented the slavery and oppression of the Livonian peasantry, which had lately goaded them to insurrection. He ascertained with great pleasure, that descendants of Scotch families were not only common in Sweden, but also in Livonia and Estonia. Among others, Douglasses, Fersens (or M'Phersons), Flemings, and a few Sinclairs. This circumstance is easily accounted for, as these provinces had belonged to Sweden during the Thirty Years' War.

The baronet's first specimen of the miseries of Rus-

sian travelling on the way to St Petersburg was most disheartening. His journey of three days and three nights was sometimes through deep sand, and sometimes over trunks of trees sprinkled scantily with gravel. To compensate for slow progress through the sand, the carriage was hurried over the trees, not only with a rapidity dangerous to the springs of the vehicle, but to the bones of the traveller. At Narva he stopped to admire the scenery, and inspect the ground ever memorable for the defeat of Peter the Great. At Tichirkowitz, he diverged from the main road to see Peterhoff; a palace execrated by history as the scene where the worst of those tragic deeds was perpetrated, of which the annals of Russia afford so many dark examples. It was here that the guilty Catherine first sacrificed her husband's crown to her ambition, and then his life to her security. Voltaire pointedly remarks, that all governments have some limit, and that the sovereign power in Russia is limited by assassination. When Sir John was at Peterhoff, no allusion could be made to this bloody transaction; no enquiry attempted; the same power which with impunity had perpetrated the crime, prevented its exposure and condemnation. The terrible reminiscences of Peterhoff had induced the Empress to choose for her summer residence the palace of Tzarskoesels.

At Peterhoff, and in other parts of Russia, Sir John found encampments of gipsies, and was surprised to learn that these Oriental wanderers lived in

tents even during winter, though the thermometer must be sometimes 40 degrees below zero. It was remarkable that the inhabitants of the neighbourhood had so little of the suspicion which we attach to them, as to have hardly any fastenings to their windows, or even to their doors.

My father describes the approach from Peterhoff to St Petersburg as a road of magnificent breadth, lined on either side with villas, which looked down upon the spacious gulf of Finland, and were occupied by the principal nobility and foreign ambassadors. Among them was the residence of the Turkish Minister, constructed after the fashion of his country, and furnished with a seraglio. This establishment, so shameful in a Christian country, was in perfect accordance with the profligacy of the Russian Court.

On the 8th of August Sir John reached Petersburg. Among his most remarkable acquaintances in that capital was the Princess Daschkow, to whom he was introduced by Dr Robertson and Dr Blair.\* The Prin-

\* Dr Robertson's letter, enclosing the introduction, contains the following paragraph relative to foreign translations of his own works :—" I shall think myself much obliged to you, if you will be so good as to bring me a copy of the new French translation of the History of Scotland. The translation of Charles V. is a capital performance ; that of America has merit, but that of Scotland was a poor one indeed, so that I shall be glad to see one which will be better. I have read, in some foreign journal, that there is a Russian translation of Charles V. Will you be so good as to enquire, and buy a copy for me. So much for the vanity of an author ! I am sorry the publication of your book is deferred."—*College of Edinburgh*, May 24, 1786.



cess had resided in Scotland, where she placed her son under the tuition of the historian. Being a woman of great ability and superior education, she exercised the rather strange office of her Imperial Majesty's Minister for Literary Affairs, being at the head of the Petersburg Academy. For this situation the Princess, in the opinion of Sir John, was better qualified than any of the male nobility. The dress of this female academician was singular. It consisted of a kind of great coat thrown over her gown; indicating, as it would seem, the predominance of masculine over softer qualities in her character. She spoke with much enthusiasm of Scotland and its inhabitants; and paid this compliment to the women of Britain, "that a well educated, unfrenchified English lady was the noblest and most perfect of God's creatures." She mentioned, that once during the two hot months in Italy, when it was impossible to go out with pleasure, she shut herself up, and lived by candle light the whole time, reading with her young family. "The Italians," said she, "thought me mad, but I never spent two months more usefully or more agreeably." Although the favourite of a despotic sovereign, this extraordinary woman was extremely liberal in her politics. "She is much inclined to republicanism and liberty," says Dr Blair, "and when here" (at Edinburgh), "was always more connected with Opposition than with Government."\*

\* Letter, dated 22d May, 1786.

At St Petersburg, Sir John had the gratification of meeting with several of his countrymen, holding high rank in the Russian service. He mentions the Count de Balmain, who commanded the corps of Noble Cadets, a favourite institution of the Empress. The Count was considered as heir-male to the Ramsays of Balmain in Kincardineshire. During an excursion to Cronstadt our traveller received much civility from the famous Admiral Greig, who showed him the fleet and fortifications, and whom he describes as “a plain, intelligent, and shrewd Scotsman.” The admiral was highly esteemed by Catherine, who, some time afterwards, on hearing of his death, exclaimed, “Where shall I find another Greig?” He had asked nothing while he lived, but her Majesty, on his decease, did not forget his children. “They are,” said the Empress, “a sacred deposit in my hands.”

On the 20th, the Baronet went to Court to be presented. About twelve, the Empress came from her private apartments to go to mass. The company formed a double line through which she passed. Her retinue, consisting of about twenty courtiers, preceded her; and she was followed by six or seven ladies, including the Princess Daschkow. My father was admitted to the chapel, and saw the Empress perform her devotions with more decorum than he expected. Returning to the hall, he was presented to Prince Potemkin, her chief favourite, a tall, manly figure. The Prince entered into conversation, expressing

much contempt for the King of Sweden, and asking Sir John's advice as to the best mode of cultivating his estates in the Ukraine. On the return of the Empress from her devotions, Sir John was introduced to her Majesty by Count Osterman. She enquired by what route he had come to Petersburg, and whether he had a pleasant voyage; and expressed her hope that he would find his stay in Russia agreeable. This reception was considered very gracious, as she seldom addressed any but persons of great distinction; and he was afterwards pointed out as "the gentleman to whom the Empress had spoken."

My father was less impressed by the magnificence than by the servility of the courtiers. He considered the Empress not less remarkable for her great abilities, than for great vices. Her skill in the art of government was evident from the instructions written with her own hand for drawing up a code of laws. She was well acquainted with French literature; and was even reading Shakspeare in a German translation. In her conduct to the church, to the army, and to the peasantry, she manifested the extent and depth of her policy. She embroidered vestments for the priesthood, feasted with the officers of the different regiments in her service, and allowed the meanest peasant to address her by the title of Matouskin, or Mother. Sir John was surprised to find that, under a despotic government like that of Russia, no prefer-

ence should be given to primogeniture. The estate of the deceased, with the exception of certain portions for the widow and the daughters, was divided equally among the sons—a rule not to be departed from but by permission from the Court. During Sir John's stay at Petersburg, a French fleet was at Cronstadt, to the arrival of which the Empress one day alluded at dinner. Her courtiers took the opportunity of praising the French officers, but their eulogiums were soon silenced by her sarcastic remark, that “probably there was not one of them who had not been in an English prison.” Some years before, when Colonel Rhall asked leave to serve as a volunteer in the American service, he got for answer, that “the Empress did not incline to take any part in the intestine divisions of England.”

My father was much alarmed at the facility with which English improvements of all kinds, and particularly in naval architecture, were obtained by foreign countries, and in particular by the Russians, proverbially the most imitative of all nations. One Hyneman, ten years before, had brought over the English machinery for making blocks; and the French Admiral at Cronstadt, Glissoniere, learnt it at that time from the Russians. One Coleman was engaged to build a hundred gun-ship for the service of Catherine, but his orders were to be always a week in advance of the native shipwright, who thus was enabled,

in his own performances, to profit by the example of the English workman. Sir John's remark, in his private journal, is, "Thus, poor England is treated."

On the 31st, my father went to Pauloski to be introduced to the son of the Empress, the Grand Duke, afterwards Paul I. He was cordially received, and invited to stay dinner; when he was placed opposite the Grand Duke and Duchess, that they might converse with him more freely. The Grand Duke mentioned that he greatly preferred the Scotch breed of horses; and after dinner, in order to show the kind of animal he alluded to, mounted his favourite charger in the court-yard, and with much satisfaction put it through the paces which it had learned under Angelo, a celebrated riding-master at Edinburgh. He expressed a great wish to have an animal of the same sort sent to him from England. Sir John conceived that such an animal would be an acceptable and well-chosen present from the British Government. He endeavoured to prevail on Lord Grenville and Lord Hawkesbury to conciliate the future Emperor by a gift which probably no French Minister would have hesitated to bestow. On their refusal he thought of sending one himself, and I observe among his papers a letter on the subject to the Russian Minister. Whether the horse was actually sent I have no means of ascertaining. In the afternoon Sir John had the honour of attending their Highnesses over their grounds. Passing through a field of barley, the Grand

Duchess good-humouredly pulled one of the ears, saying, "Sir, take this ear and try if such grain will grow in your country." They pressed him to remain till next day, but previous engagements obliged him to take his departure. The Grand Duke, being at one time urged to demand possession of the imperial crown from his mother, who was evidently an usurper, made the memorable answer—memorable from his own terrible destiny,—“I will never furnish my son with an apology for conspiring to dethrone me.” My father received a letter six years afterwards from this Prince, expressing himself in terms of much regard.

On the 5th September, Sir John set out for Moscow. After passing hastily through Novogorod, the ancient capital of the empire, and admiring its eighty domes and spires, he reached his destination on the 10th. He was much pleased with the magnificence of this almost Asiatic city, and joined heartily in Count Osterman's remark, "what a town would this have been if all the money spent in Petersburg had been laid out here!" The Count did not foresee that in a few years a man would arise, who, carrying conquest before him to its gates, would make the Russians themselves lay the whole of it in ashes to save their country from subjugation.

Visiting the archives, Sir John was amused with the anxiety of the keeper to prove that the Czar had been long acknowledged by foreign powers to be of imperial rank. The loyal Muscovite produced with

much reluctance a few documents from England, which simply designated the autocrat as king, but exhibited triumphantly a letter from the Court of Germany, sealed with the imperial arms in gold, giving the Czar the title of Emperor.

Dining with Count Orloff, the Scottish stranger was shown a remarkable species of pigeons, valued in Russia as much as falcons formerly were in England. They are taught to ascend out of sight, and to return again in circles with such precision as to alight on the finger from which they took their flight. The Orloff family were supposed to have expended L.20,000 on this amusement. A merchant having a dwelling-house and a pigeon-house to dispose of, demanded 20,000 rubles for the two. "Including the pigeons," said a nobleman, who knew the value of the breed, "I will give you 14,000 rubles (L.2330) for your property, but without them not 2000 rubles" (L.330)—thus valuing the pigeons at L.2000 sterling.

On the 21st we find our tourist at the hospitable mansion of Count Romanzoff in the Ukraine. The Count was brought up, under Marshal Keith, in the Prussian service, and afterwards rose to be himself a Marshal in the service of Russia. He acquired the epithet of Sadounaisky, signifying the conqueror beyond the Danube. At dinner a Russian General and several officers were present; but such is the subserviency of Russians to their superiors, that not one of

them spoke a single word even to each other. The Marshal said that one profession was as much as any man could know thoroughly, and that therefore he paid little attention to any subject not connected with military affairs. "Nothing is so imprudent," he observed, "as to despise your enemy, or to rouse his passions, whether of revenge, pride, or indignation; since the hostile energy thus excited may compensate for want of skill and courage." He deprecated generals being too often seen by their own troops, as tending to make them less respected. Though he admitted no inferior to familiar intercourse, he was courteous to the meanest of the soldiers; and constantly took off his hat when even the children of the peasantry bowed to him. He ascribed his victories over the Turks to his constant preparation against assault; "for," said he, "if the Turks once break in, there is no resisting their impetuosity." The Count entered heartily into the views of the Empress as to the annexation of Turkey to her dominions. On this subject he found no lack of sympathy in his English visitor, who looked upon it as a disgrace to Christendom that a horde of infidel barbarians, rendered incapable of improvement by their political and religious prejudices, should be suffered to remain encamped in the richest plains of Europe.

On leaving Russia, Sir John remarked, that it is in the happiest of all political situations. "Its dominions," says he, "are so situated, that it cannot be



attacked to advantage, and consequently is safe at home. It has the choice of allies, and can play the game of Denmark against Sweden, the Emperor against Prussia, France against England, or *vice versa*, as it finds most for its own interest. It has gained by its alliances with every power it has been connected with, but has hardly, in any instance, made a return."

My father entered Poland on the 26th of September. After getting on slowly over bad roads, with eight post horses, through a country which he describes as in a miserably desert state, though susceptible of high improvement, he reached Warsaw on the 4th October. His visit derives a melancholy interest from the crisis on which the country was then verging; the last King of Poland was then in his capital; one of the last diets was sitting; the kingdom had already been dismembered by one partition; and as soon as three rapacious powers could settle their respective shares of the spoil, was destined to lose its national existence by another.

On the 6th, the baronet, in company with the Archbishop of Carthage, the Pope's nuncio, went to visit the royal apartments. While they stood admiring the paintings by Bacciarelli, the ill-fated King entered. He was in the 54th year of his age, tall, rather handsome, and very elegant in his manners; in his features he resembled the Marlborough family. With moderate pretensions to the character of a statesman, he was certainly an amiable and accomplished

gentleman. Addressing Sir John Sinclair, he observed that the name of Sinclair was well known to him. He spoke of the Sinclairs of Sweden, and of a Major Sinclair, whose assassination by the Russians had nearly been made a pretence for a war.\*

On the 8th, Sir John was regularly presented at court. The King spoke to him in English, and, among other obliging expressions, regretted that his stay was likely to be so short; adding, "I would not have parted with you so soon, had I not believed you are a good Englishman; that you can be of service to your country at home, and that it might suffer by your absence."

In the evening, my father returned, by invitation, to the palace, and held a long political conversation with the King. Mr Pitt was a great favourite of Stanislaus. His Majesty was much pleased with a character of that Minister which Sir John had drawn up, and read it to his sister, commenting occasionally on different passages. At the conclusion of some remarks on England, he declared his ardent wish to assimilate the Polish constitution as much as possible to the British.

Sir John exchanged frequent visits with Mr Whitworth (afterwards Lord Whitworth), the English Minister, as also with Count Stackleberg, ambassador from Russia. Mr Whitworth at first said of Stackle-

\* This fact is mentioned in the State Papers published at the time.

berg, that he governed Poland with decency and moderation ; but soon found reason to alter his opinion. The Muscovite stranger maintained as much dignity as the lawful sovereign, and exacted great servility from the natives.

My father thought the oligarchy of Poland a worse government than the despotism of Russia ; more insecure both against internal convulsions and foreign aggression ; more vexatious to the nobility, and more oppressive to the people. All the good intentions of the King were frustrated by the spirit of faction : “ I have enjoyed,” he said, “ but few happy moments during my reign.” While the Sovereign was without power, and the people without freedom, the nobility, a dissipated and effeminate race, were alternately tyrants or slaves to one another. The privilege of the *liberum veto*, giving to an individual noble the power of interdicting the proceedings of the legislature, was fatal to good government. The aristocracy were impoverished by useless and ostentatious expense. “ The word *grand*,” says our observant traveller, “ has done much to make Poland little. There are so many grand marshals, and grand et ceteras, that nothing is thought of but the paltry arts of acquiring these high-sounding titles. To this absurd and ruinous vanity may be ascribed their general inattention to the public interest. Poland,” he adds, “ is at this hour within the grasp of Russia.”

When Sir John attended the diet, he observed

that each of the four grand constables had a long and powerful baton. When the diet assembled in a hall, if any disorder arose, they used to beat the floor so violently with their batons, that not a word could be heard, and thus enforced silence. But when the diet assembled in the fields, two of the grand constables with their batons knocked down any refractory member. Our traveller procured a baton which had been used in 1786, and sent it to Mr Speaker Addington, to show how different were the means employed for maintaining order in the Polish from the British legislature.

Dining with the Prince Primate, the Archbishop of Gneznow, Sir John obtained some curious information about Prince Stanislaus, the King's nephew. From a state of extreme poverty, this young Prince extricated himself by a bold speculation. He found means to borrow about L.250,000 in Holland, on his uncle's security, at about four per cent. With this sum, he purchased estates in the Ukraine and other provinces, producing nine or ten per cent. In ten years, he hoped not only to pay the money borrowed, but to realize about L.50,000 a-year. He would thus be amongst the richest men in Poland. He usually dressed in an English uniform, being afraid, as a candidate for the Crown, to irritate Russia by affecting popularity in his own country.

Among other persons with whom the baronet be-

came acquainted at Warsaw, was M. Tepper, a banker, who gave a splendid fête, and invited the greater part of the corps diplomatique to meet the English stranger. My father was somewhat shocked at the fastidiousness and ill-breeding betrayed by the noble guests, who, while partaking heartily of the banquet, made no secret of their contempt for the hospitable parvenu, their entertainer, laughing at "little Tepper," almost to his face. From his name, Tepper, and from the circumstance that none of his family spoke English, Sir John could hardly have supposed himself in a Scotch house, and was astonished, therefore, to find in the diningroom portraits which, upon enquiry, turned out to be those of Lord Pitfour, Captain Ferguson, governor of Greenwich Hospital, and others. Tepper's name was properly Ferguson, and he was very proud of his Scotch pedigree. His fortune was immense, and being the richest man in Warsaw, he could well bear with the jocularities of the proud grandees, his needy guests. He had by far the best of the joke, and might have returned the sneers of envy with the self-complacent sentiment in Horace,

*Populus me sibilat—at mihi plaudo*

*Iipse domi simul ac nummos contemplor in arcâ.*

He stood alone—or almost a solitary example of prosperity amidst the general poverty, having accumulated a fortune of L.430,000. On one occasion a bill was drawn upon him from Russia for L.80,000,

which he answered at sight. So low was credit in Poland that the legal interest of money was eight per cent, which Tepper would allow for any sum placed in his hands. Some time afterwards, on my father's return to England, Mr Pitt, at the close of some political conversation, asked him where he had fared best during his travels: The Baronet, having Tepper's dinner fresh in remembrance, said, "In Poland." "I have often heard," replied the Minister, "of the *Polish Diet*."

The Poles, notwithstanding all their miseries, were proud of their Constitution. They considered an elective monarchy superior to all other forms of government. Even my father's Polish valet harangued him one day on the kind of aristocratic dignity with which this eligibility to a throne invested the whole Polish nation. "Sir," said the man, "I myself might be King of Poland." The Latin language, formerly so prevalent in the country, had fallen into disuse. Our traveller, however, was addressed fluently in Latin by his landlord at an inn, and heard his postilion complaining of a long stage in the classical phraseology; "*Via est magna, etiam maxima.*"

Sir John left Warsaw on the 10th October, and proceeding through Cracow and Olmutz, reached Vienna on the 17th. He was presented on the 22d to the Emperor Joseph, by Sir Robert Murray Keith, whom he considered as the ablest of all our Ministers on the Continent. He describes Joseph II. as

a plain man, brought up in the school of adversity, punctual in business, but engrossed by the details of a petty economy, quite unworthy of a great or comprehensive mind. He was severe in his administration; but, like the Empress Catherine, sought popularity by receiving petitions even from his meanest subjects. Sir John, on one occasion, found his Imperial Majesty standing in a passage, where a crowd of poor were presenting their petitions on their knees. The Emperor received our traveller and Sir R. M. Keith at a private audience in his cabinet, and put a number of questions respecting the tour. His Majesty's known dislike to Poland led the tourist to omit the intermediate part of his journey, and to answer in general terms that he had come from Russia. The Emperor afterwards alluded to the gratifying reception given to the Archduke and Duchess in England; but appeared to have been most struck with their account of *une chose unique*, which they had witnessed at Portsmouth, namely, four thousand pieces of cannon seen at one view. Observing the Emperor begin to rub his hands, the usual signal to withdraw, Sir John and Sir Robert took their leave.

The Emperor appeared to suspect that he was not regarded with much favour in England. Speaking one day to Colonel Gordon, an English officer, whom he had placed next to him at table, "Your King," he said, "does not like Germany, at least Upper Germany. Had I been well used by England she

might have depended on my friendship, and would never have lost America."\* Nothing, indeed, could have been more impolitic and disgraceful than the negligence of the English Government towards the Court of Vienna. Sir Robert Murray Keith assured my father that for weeks his despatches to Downing Street remained unanswered. "I wish," said he, "that they would only send me large packets of old newspapers, the receipt of which would give me some little consequence in the eyes of the Austrian Government." The Emperor was much annoyed by a foolish speech of Sir Nathaniel Wraxall in our House of Commons. He considered it beneath the Imperial dignity to speak publicly upon the subject himself; but persons in his confidence expressed on his part their indignation at the idea that the "Emperor's sword, like a lawyer's tongue, was to be had for hire."

On the 23d Sir John was presented to the Archduke and Archduchess. An immense crowd had assembled to congratulate them on their safe arrival from England. The British Minister introduced all the English together, when her Imperial Highness took occasion to express the pleasure she had derived from her recent journey to England. The day was fine, and the sun was shining at the time: upon which

\* An intelligent German historian, Baron Varnhagen von Ense, in the Berlin Critical Review, June 1831, coincides with the opinion here advanced by the Emperor.



she remarked, that in England, while she was there, the sun always shone ; with a number of other compliments, showing that both the Archduke and herself were much pleased with their visit. In such terms had they described their reception to the Emperor, that, notwithstanding his antipathy to England, he expressed a wish to have been of their party.

At Vienna the Baronet formed an acquaintance with Prince Kaunitz, the Austrian Prime Minister, with Dr Ingenhouz, and Baron Born, both distinguished naturalists, with Count Zinzendorff, Comptroller-General of Finance, the Abbé Denis, and other eminent political and literary men. Of Prince Kaunitz my father had a very low opinion, and ascribed to the egotism and vanity of that Minister, as well as to our own negligence, the rupture of the ancient alliance between Austria and Great Britain, so essential to the interests of both countries.

One evening, on a visit to Dr Ingenhouz, Sir John was shown a number of letters which that celebrated philosopher had received from Dr Franklin. From certain political hints in these documents, the inference was plain, that it was from pique and resentment that the American patriot put forth all his energies to disunite America from England. Our traveller was delighted to meet the Abbé Denis, a celebrated poet, by whom an excellent translation had been made of Ossian, into German, and promised

the translator a copy of that work, as soon as it was printed in the original Gælic. Among the most useful men of talents at that time, was Baron Born, whose scientific exertions had raised the mineral productions of his country from about 16,000,000 florins, to L.1,700,000 a-year. This philosopher was suffering acute pain during his interview with my father, and exclaimed, in a paroxysm of his distemper, "*Si j'étais un Anglais, je me tuerois.*"

Sir John was anxious to obtain information from Count Zinzendorff, an intelligent and laborious man, respecting financial matters ; but the Count had received express orders to keep every thing in his department as secret as possible. At the Austrian capital the Baronet saw three military personages, connected by parentage with his own country, Marshals Laudohn and Lacy, and General Browne. The two latter were of Irish extraction, and the former of Scotch ; but all three (as is usual with denaturalized citizens) were united in hostility to the land of their forefathers.

On the 1st of November our traveller left Vienna, and proceeded through Prague and Dresden to Berlin. On the 12th he was presented at Court by Mr Ewart, of the English Embassy, to Frederick William II., who, a few months before, had succeeded to the carefully-hoarded treasures and powerful armies of the great military prodigy, his predecessor. There were two rooms covered entirely with black cloth. In

one the King gave the parole of the day, and issued orders to the garrison ; in the other, all Foreign Ministers and strangers were introduced to him. His Majesty spoke with great affability to every one, and enquired of the Baronet the particulars of his journey.

At the Prussian capital my father associated with many interesting persons ; such were Count Hertzberg ; the Prince de Sacken ; Baron de Reede, the Dutch Envoy ; Count Fink de Finkenstein, the Prime Minister ; Prince Henry of Prussia, and Count Mirabeau. The Baron de Reede gave a dinner, during which he made a curious remark with regard to the republicans in Holland. “ The party,” said he, “ has three leaders—the Pensionaries of Amsterdam, Haerlem, and Dort. None of them have any family to provide for ; they are therefore careless what risk they run, especially as they may carry their whole fortune in their pockets.” After supper, at the house of Count Finkenstein, Sir John was surprised to find himself engaged at “ blind-man’s-buff.” The apology of his host for this juvenile game, in which all the seniors of the company joined, was a desire to gratify the young princes. The amusements, indeed, of Berlin, could afford but little satisfaction to an intelligent tourist. Assemblies were held weekly at the houses of the several Ministers of State, in rotation. They were called *conversazioni* ; but there was literally no conversation. Almost all the company sat down to cards till supper was announced. At

one of these silent meetings, my father counted, out of eighty-seven persons present, only five, including himself, who were not seated at the card-table. A dinner-party at this unsocial city was a great event, being not only of rare occurrence, but of long duration. The invitation, certainly, was given uncereemoniously, and by a verbal message ; but no mistake could happen through the carelessness of the messenger, as all the Berlin world knew perfectly where the dinner was, and who the guests. " The dinners," says the author of the " Code of Health," " were miserably long and tedious, and the guests ate most voraciously. The old custom in Germany was to get up between the services, and to walk about in another room until the second service was put on table and ready to be devoured. The longest dinner I ever witnessed was at the house of the Prince de Sacken, where the company sat eating for nearly five hours !"

An agreeable relief to my father from the monotony of this gastronomic life was the society of the celebrated Mirabeau, who resided at the same hotel. He told Sir John, in confidence, that he was sent to Berlin by M. Calonne, to prevent Prussia from abandoning the French interest for that of England. When other methods failed, he had recourse to intrigues, suited rather to the taste of our second Charles, than to that of Frederic William. My father had drawn up in French a character at some length of Mr Pitt, which he showed the Count, and

which the latter good-naturedly revised, so that the style became such as would abide the scrutiny of the most fastidious Parisian critic. Finance was among the favourite studies of Mirabeau. He proposed translating the "History of the Public Revenue" into French. Before my father's departure, he furnished him with introductions to three friends at Paris, whom he somewhat invidiously described as the only three individuals there worth knowing. These were the Marquis de la Fayette, M. Penchaud, the banker, and the Abbé Perigord, afterwards Prince Talleyrand.

Sir John took peculiar interest ever after in the sayings and doings of Mirabeau. The Count once told a common friend that France was much indebted to England for having taken the lead and shown the example of a revolution. "Among other lessons," said he, "which you have taught us, is that of *not taking off the King's head*. We shall avoid that blunder; it is the sure way to establish a military government." Mirabeau was well acquainted with English literature. He said that there was a Scotch metaphysician, from whose works he had derived more peace and satisfaction than from those of any other philosopher. This author proved afterwards to be the well-known Dr Reid. The sudden death of Mirabeau, at so critical a moment for the French republic, gave rise to suspicions of poison. Our Scottish Hippocrates, however, Dr Gregory, used to allege,

perhaps with as much truth as humour, that "he died of the ignorance of his physician."

At Berlin my father procured information respecting the manufacture of china, and transmitted a specimen to the far-famed Mr Wedgwood, whose name is popularly used to designate a certain kind of ware. Mr Wedgwood acknowledged the obligation by presenting Sir John with a complete desert-set, after the same pattern, with the information that he had never had so many orders for any article as for that suggested to him by the Berlin specimen.

Sir John intended to leave Berlin on the 20th, but was induced to remain by an invitation to sup with Prince Henry, which our Minister requested him to accept. This was the only instance in which the punctuality of our tourist was interrupted, and in which he did not set out on the very day he had intended; but his complaisance was well rewarded, for the King was of the party, and conversed with him for some time. Calling him aside, his Majesty made a similar remark to that of the royal personages before mentioned, that the name of Sinclair was not unknown to him, and that he had often heard of the Sinclairs of Sweden. "I understand," continued he, "that you have paid particular attention to the subjects of commerce and finance, subjects with which I myself am much occupied at present. Had you stayed longer here, I should have been glad of your sentiments and assistance in these matters." Sir John

replied, that he could be of little service, but that any useful suggestions in his power would be at his Majesty's command. "With respect to commerce," said the King, "I think that the trade of my dominions is subject to impolitic restrictions. These it is my intention to remove; and if you return some years hence to Prussia, you will find a material improvement." My father remarked on the advantageous position of Prussia for trade, and expressed his confidence that the contemplated alterations would be attended with the happiest results. "As regards finance," proceeded the King, "I flatter myself that many useful changes can be made, particularly in the excise. What would you say to an excise in England, under the management of Frenchmen?"

My father observed, that it was with real satisfaction he beheld the commencement of his Majesty's reign, which he had little doubt would prove as glorious for the arts of peace as that of his predecessor had been for those of war. "By giving more liberty to trade," he added, "and by levying the public revenues in a manner less burdensome to the people, your Majesty, I am convinced, will greatly augment the resources of Prussia. I would urge, in particular, that a diminution of the transit duties will actually increase the revenue from the quantity of foreign goods, especially from Poland, which will find their way through the Prussian dominions. My journey has been very extensive, but I have spent most of my

time in Russia. I have the satisfaction of informing your Majesty, that all the better part of the Russian nation consider Prussia as the natural German ally of their country; and I have little doubt of seeing, in time, a wise and proper system of political connexion organized in the North." The King, after mentioning that he entertained similar expectations, began to enquire into the state of Russia, principally in regard to its finances. Sir John answered, that in the course of his journey he had collected much information as to the state of that empire, which might be of service to Prussia; that it was impossible for him to communicate the whole verbally and extemporaneously, but that, on his return to England, he would embrace an early opportunity of transmitting it by Count Lusi from London. His Majesty replied, "that nothing could be more agreeable to him;" and was pleased to add, "when any plan occurs to you which you think may be useful to Prussia, I desire that you will always forward it to me personally through the channel of my Minister in England." He then politely concluded, by expressing his regret at the shortness of my father's stay at Berlin, wishing him a pleasant tour and safe return to England, and enjoining him again not to forget what he had mentioned with regard to Count Lusi.

After the King had retired, Sir John conversed with Prince Henry on questions, more particularly of commerce and finance. The Prince asked his opi-



nion as to a recent treaty of commerce between France and England ; adding, “ My own idea is, that your country will derive from it the greater share of benefit.” He next said, “ As you have so deeply studied the subject, let me ask, do you think it possible to contrive a perfect system of finance ?” Sir John answered, “ If a society or nation could be found of perfect men, all of them divested of avarice, and all zealous for the public interest, perhaps a perfect system, as regards that country and that particular period, might be devised. But the same system would not answer in a different country, producing articles of a different kind, and governed in a different manner. An independent revenue, for example, though suitable to despotism, is contrary to the principles of a free government ; nor would the same system suit the same country in different stages of civilisation ; for instance, at first all taxes would be paid in personal service, next in kind, and, finally in money.” The Prince appeared much pleased with the answer. “ I regret,” says he, “ having no farther opportunity of cultivating so valuable an acquaintance.” The baronet was amused with the interest he excited among the courtiers, after being so much noticed by the royal family. “ Such,” says he, in his Journal, “ is the consequence of a Sovereign’s smiles. Alas ! on what a sandy foundation are such attentions built.”

In consequence of these conversations the traveller had shortly afterwards a letter from our Minister, Mr

Ewart, soliciting his good offices with Mr Pitt towards forming a commercial treaty between Great Britain and Prussia. Mr Ewart conceived him, from all he had seen and heard, peculiarly able to explain the good intentions of the Prussian Court towards England, and the best mode of carrying them into effect.

My father left Berlin on the 22d, and reached Hanover on the 25th of November. Next day he dined with the Duke of York, who, at that time, nominally governed the country ; though the reins of power were in the hands principally of Baron Blerois, the confidential Minister of George III. He describes the military art as the Duke's favourite object, and the command of an English army his chief ambition. He was getting so tired of Hanover that he intended to consider England thenceforward as his own country, and Germany an occasional séjour. He had not wasted his time abroad, but had acquired a great deal of military and some political knowledge. Prince Kaunitz, the Austrian Prime Minister, had behaved to the Duke with his usual haughtiness. Kaunitz had asked his Royal Highness to take the air with him on horseback, but after the ride was over, turned, and left him in the ménage, without uttering a word. The Duke said, he never would forget a speech made to him by Joseph, which betrayed the secret policy of that Emperor. " It is my interest to keep well with France, for I can then take all

my troops out of Flanders and Italy to attack Frederick.”

Sir John conceived that the advantages of our union with Hanover had never been effectually improved by Great Britain. The Electorate commanded the mouths of two great rivers, forming important channels for our commercial intercourse with the interior of Europe. The Elector, he conceived, might agree to charge no transit duty on the productions of Prussia and Saxony exported, provided no transit duty was charged on British goods imported through Hanover into those countries. Thus, British and East India produce might reach Leipsic, the great entrepôt of Germany.

Sir John entered Holland on the 30th November, and was introduced to the Prince and Princess of Orange. The Stadtholder he describes as of a weak and unprepossessing appearance, not deficient in abilities, but better fitted to give other men good advice than to act by it himself. He had been ill educated, taught to be suspicious of all mankind, and to look upon them as either fools or knaves; the former of whom cannot give a sound opinion, while the latter will not, unless it suits their own interests. He was indolent in business, and neglected important matters for months together. He had no political nor perhaps personal courage; and had let slip many favourable opportunities of allaying the disaffection which prevailed in the country. Still, however, he was a

favourite with many of his people, especially the Zealanders.

Of the Princess of Orange, sister to the reigning King of Prussia, my father entertained a very different opinion. He thought her one of the ablest women in Europe—not personally disliked even by the republican or patriotic party. Her domestic life was amiable and exemplary. She was at great pains in educating her children, who appeared to profit by her instructions.

Holland at that time was the theatre of the basest intrigues on the part of France. French agents swarmed throughout the provinces in such number and variety, that it was proverbially said, “Every Dutchman may have a French spy to follow him like a dog, and of his own choosing, young or old, tall or short, male or female, civil or military.” The French left no means untried to alienate the people from the Stadtholder and from England. With hearts narrowed by selfishness, they were perpetually declaiming on universal benevolence. They bribed the daily press, and thus commanded public opinion; since the people, who associated little together, had no other means of information. They employed able libellers in prose and verse to asperse, with continual calumny, the House of Orange. They bought over the most influential persons with immense largesses, to the extent, it was alleged, of half a million; using, for the purpose of this corruption, money borrowed from

the Dutch themselves, and never likely to be repaid. They laboured to excite the jealousy of the Hollanders against England, representing the latter country as their commercial enemy and rival ; and persuading many Dutchmen on patriotic principles to sell out of the English funds, in order to purchase in their own or in the French. They instituted a patriotic free corps for the purpose of promoting disloyalty ; and, above all, they endeavoured as much as possible to debauch the moral and religious principles of the people. In short, the house of the French ambassador was “ a temple of every species of corruption.” The object of these intrigues was to weaken England, to strengthen their interests in the East Indies, to augment their navy, and to make Holland their bank for raising loans.

This account of anti-Anglican and anti-Christian emissaries, which a modern reader might well take for a description of the French Directory in 1794, was written at the close of 1786, while Louis XVI. was yet in the zenith of his power. In the very next year, my father’s forebodings as to the result of French artifice in Holland were realised. The Stadtholder’s government was overthrown, and was only re-established by the armed intervention of Prussia.

From Holland our traveller proceeded to Flanders, where he again found the seeds of discontent and disloyalty. These seeds had been sown by the same agency, and were already springing up in consequence

of some needless and unpopular innovations. The Emperor Joseph had been endeavouring to negotiate an exchange of his Flemish provinces for Bavaria. He was then engaged in the insane process of dismantling his fortifications, under pretence of economy ; a measure which afterwards permitted the revolutionary armies of France to overrun the country without impediment.

Sir John returned through France to London on the 16th January, 1787, after an absence of more than seven months, in the course of which he had travelled about 7500 English miles ; and had established personal acquaintance and correspondence with the most distinguished literary and political characters on the continent. He accumulated also a stock of various knowledge, of which he afterwards largely availed himself in the prosecution of his unceasing plans for the benefit of the country.

Soon afterwards he had a private audience of George the Third, to communicate such particulars of his tour as he thought would interest his Majesty. The King asked many questions regarding the three northern powers—Denmark, Sweden, and Russia ; and very graciously accepted my father's offer to draw up for his use the result of his observations and enquiries. The King alluded to a revolution reported to have nearly taken place in Sweden. Sir John replied, that the reports were well founded, and that but for the interference of Count Ferson, a nobleman of

Scottish extraction (his name being properly M'Pherson), by whose exertions the Diet was prevented from proceeding to extremities, another revolution would have been effected, and the aristocratic system restored. The reply of George III. was worthy of a British Sovereign. "The King of Sweden would have deserved his fate ; for the Sovereign of a limited monarchy, if he is an honest man, will never aim at despotic power." Speaking afterwards of America, his Majesty took occasion to declare, "I always considered the American war as a war for maintaining the rights, not of the crown, but of the Parliament. The Americans acknowledged the supremacy of the crown, but they denied the authority of Parliament. I much lament the separation of the two countries ; but having once acknowledged the independence of the colonies, I will never countenance any plan for disturbing their government, and bringing them back to their old allegiance." On the above royal expressions Sir John thus remarks :—"These sentiments, spontaneously uttered, expressed with warmth, and, as far as I could possibly judge, coming from the heart, sufficiently prove that strict honesty, inflexible integrity, and a regard for the free constitution he had sworn to maintain, were distinguished traits in the character of George III."

In compliance with the King's desire, Sir John drew up three quarto pamphlets entitled, "General Observations regarding the Present State of Den-

mark, Sweden, and Russia." These were printed, but not published ; as many of their details were not at that time proper for the public eye. He sent a copy of his remarks on Russia to Lord Chancellor Thurlow, and received from him the following reply :—

" The Chancellor presents his best respects to Sir John Sinclair, and returns him many thanks for the use of his observations on Russia, in which he has found much information and entertainment."

In another note, Lord Thurlow terms this tract a "very valuable composition, which, though a short and rapid account, was so well digested, and consisted of such particulars as to afford a most agreeable view of the subject."

The author of these tracts sent also copies of them to General Washington, by their common friend, Dr Enoch Edwards, with injunctions, after perusal by the General and Mr Jefferson, to destroy them. In his answer, the Doctor expresses the gratification which those distinguished persons had received from them, and states his regret at being obliged to refuse Mr Adams, who was at that time President, the same favour. "He" (President Adams) "also wished," says Dr Edwards, "to read the papers you committed to my care in confidence to show to General Washington and Mr Jefferson, and then to burn them. This I punctually performed, not above three weeks before



President Adams applied to me. I burnt them with great regret, and thought at the time that you ought not to have laid such an injunction upon me."

The following remarks on the above pamphlets are from the pen of Dr Blair: " They convey much curious matter, and much information on the state of these kingdoms, and do honour to that accurate and scrutinising observation with which you surveyed public affairs when you was abroad. Indeed, neither at home nor abroad, do you allow yourself to be unemployed, or inattentive to the interests of your country. Though I wish the public were in possession of part of your intelligence, yet, considering some of the anecdotes you relate, and the freedom with which you treat some distinguished persons in high office, I think you were much in the right not to allow these papers to go into public circulation." \*

\* Letter dated 5th December, 1792.

## CHAPTER IV.

Second Marriage—Macdonald Family—Bosvilliana—Habits of Life—  
Useful Suggestions—Differences with Mr Pitt—Warren Hastings—  
Neutral Party—African Association—Regency Question—Slave  
Trade—British Wool Society—Cheviot Sheep.

BEFORE resuming the series of events in my father's political history, I may here introduce, at one view, in order to avoid breaks in my narrative, some particulars of his private life.

Sir John Sinclair, soon after his return from the continent, married the Honourable Diana, only daughter of Alexander, first Lord Macdonald. The reputation of Miss Macdonald not only for personal beauty and accomplishments, but for those more valuable qualities which insure the happiness of domestic life, had reached him before he enjoyed an opportunity of forming her acquaintance. The marriage ceremony, which was performed by Dr Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, took place at St George's Hanover Square, on the 6th of March 1788.\*

\* The Bishop some time after wrote the following letter of congratulation :—

“ Bath, April 6, 1788.

“ My dear Sir John,

“ I have this moment the honour of your letter, and send you a thousand felicitations on your marriage, and beg you to

On their presentation afterwards at Court, his Majesty made the complimentary remark, "that although he had seen handsomer men and handsomer women than Sir John and Lady Sinclair, they were the handsomest pair who had ever been presented to him.

The family with which the Baronet became connected, was among the oldest and most distinguished in Scotland. There are two rival claimants for the chieftainship of the Macdonald clan; but the representative of Lady Sinclair's family has always been styled by Highlanders emphatically, *MacDhonnail na'n Eilean*, or Macdonald of the Isles. The hereditary possessions are situated in the Isles of Skye and Uist; and have been sufficiently described by Dr Johnson and his friend Boswell in their tour to the Hebrides. The second Lord, Lady Sinclair's eldest brother, whose extensive local improvements are so well known and appreciated in the land of his ancestors, was in Parliament during the times of Mr Pitt. and was a strenuous supporter of that minister.\* He

make with Mrs Watson's my best respects to your lady, who, I doubt not has, and will continue to have, as much reason to thank me for the knot I tied as you have. The waters here have done me neither good nor harm; and that, I think, is saying enough for them, and for all the medical tribe. Adieu, and believe me, your faithful and affectionate servant,

R. LLANDAFF."

\* Lord Macdonald was returned for a Cornish borough. The author of these Memoirs many years afterwards travelled with him through Devonshire and Cornwall. On our approach

died unmarried in 1824, and was succeeded by his brother, Godfrey, a general in the army. Lady Sinclair's other brothers were Archibald, who married Miss Campbell, sister-in-law to the Prince de Polignac, the unfortunate Prime Minister of Charles X.; James, Colonel in the guards, killed at Bergen-op-Zoom in 1815; and Dudley, still unmarried, and resident in London. My mother's uncle, Sir James Macdonald, is well known in the biography of literature as a surprising instance of early talent. He died young, and

to the river Tamer we observed a small town prettily situated on its banks. I stopped the postboy to inquire the name of the place, and was answered Saltash. "*Saltash*," exclaimed my uncle, putting down the glass; "I had no idea of Saltash being so near. I rejoice to see for the first time my old borough. You know I represented it in Parliament." Sir Walter Scott, with his incomparable talent and humour, once coined a letter which he fathered upon my uncle, respecting the much contested chieftainship alluded to above.—He used to say of Glengary, whom he rightly termed the most spirited of Highlanders, that he wrote to Lord Macdonald, requiring his Lordship to acknowledge him for his chief, and received the following answer:—

"My dear Glengary,

"As soon as you can prove yourself to be my chief, I shall be ready to acknowledge you: in the meantime, I am yours.

"MACDONALD."

Sir Walter used to add, that one day he amused himself by telling a young lady that Lord Macdonald's family, from which she was descended, were not chieftains of the clan, but should be styled simply "Macdonalds of Slate:" but that he was at once silenced by the impromptu; "Well, Sir Walter, say what you please, you will always find the *Slates* at the top of the house."

it is of him that David Hume writes in a letter to Adam Smith ; “ Were you and I together we should shed tears at present, for the death of Sir James Macdonald. We could not possibly have suffered a greater loss than that valuable young man.”\* Lady Sinclair’s other uncle by her father’s side was Sir Archibald Macdonald, for many years Chief Baron of the English Exchequer. By her mother’s side she had a third uncle, William Bosville, Esq. of Gunthwaite in Yorkshire, and an aunt, Julia, married to Viscount Dudley and Ward, and mother to Earl Dudley, Secretary for Foreign Affairs during the administration of Mr Canning.

As my granduncle, Bosville, was among the most original and eccentric characters of his day, and as the subject of this Memoir was a frequent visitor at his house, I may be excused for introducing a few *Bosvilliana* related by my father or his contemporaries. My granduncle’s exterior consisted of the single-breasted coat, powdered hair and queue, and other paraphernalia of a courtier in the reign of George II.; but within this courtly garb was enclosed one of the most ultra-liberal spirits of the time. He assembled every day at his house in Welbeck Street a party of congenial souls, never exceeding twelve in number, nor receiving the important summons to dinner a single moment after five o’clock. Such was the old gentleman’s punctuality, that the first stroke of the

\* Dugald Stewart’s Life of Adam Smith, vol. iii. p. 465.

clock was the signal for going down stairs ; and when Mr Friend, the astronomer royal, arriving half a minute after, met the company on the staircase, Bosville addressed him with, “ I trust, Mr Friend, you will not fail to bear in mind for the future, that we don’t reckon time here by the meridian of Greenwich, but by the meridian of Welbeck Street.” The servants entered into this whimsical accuracy of their master, and when a well-known guest, out of breath with haste, one day rang the door bell about four minutes after five, the footman, looking up from the area, informed him that his master was “ busy dining !” This repulse was in perfect keeping with his master’s favourite maxim ; “ Some say better late than never ; I say, better never than late.” A slate was kept in the hall, on which any intimate friend (and he had many), might inscribe his name as a guest for the day. Among the persons thus privileged, I may mention, besides family connexions, Sir Francis Burdett, Lord Hutchinson, Horne Tooke, Parson Este, Major James, Baron Dimsdale, Lord Oxford, and Mr Clifford the barrister of O.P. celebrity. A specimen of Mr Bosville’s humour may be given in his description of the last dinner he partook at the house of Lord Dudley, his brother-in-law. “ I always dine,” said he, “ punctually at five ; but when I reached Park Lane after six, I commonly was forced to wait half an hour before my sister returned from her morning drive. Not till half-past seven did a single soul arrive to dinner, and I have often heard eight strike

when we were going down stairs. Feeling ashamed to be the only performer, while the rest were little better than spectators, I generally rose with an appetite. The fact is, Lady Dudley and her friends always dine at three o'clock without knowing it. At that hour she takes a beef steak and a glass of Madeira, which she chooses to call a luncheon. Finding that Lord Dudley's habits and my own did not agree, I at last concluded a treaty offensive and defensive, by which each engaged not to trouble the other with invitations, nor be angry at not receiving them. Since that time we have always lived on brotherly terms."

Mr Bosville scarcely ever quitted the metropolis; he used to say that London was the best residence in winter, and that he knew no place like it in summer. One year when in Yorkshire, he made a point of not visiting his own estates, lest he should be involved in the cares and troubles of a landed proprietor. But though he seldom really travelled, he sometimes made imaginary journeys. He used to mention as a grave fact, that once he visited the Scilly Isles, and attended a ball at St Mary's, where he found a young lady giving herself great airs, because her education had received a "finish" at the "Land's End." Another of his stories was, that having been at Rome during the last illness of Clement XIV., he went daily to the Vatican to ascertain what chance he had of enjoying the spectacle of an installation. The bulletins, according to my grand-uncle's playful imagination,

were variously expressed, but each more alarming than its predecessor. First, "his Holiness is very ill;" next, "his Excellency is worse;" then, "his Eminence is in a very low state; and at last, the day before the Pope expired, came forth the startling announcement, "his Infallibility is delirious." This pleasant original occasionally coined anecdotes at the expence of his own guests, and related them to their face, for the amusement of the company. Parson Este was once editor of a paper called the World; and Bosville alleged of him before a large party, that one day a gentleman in deep mourning came to him at the office, requesting the insertion of a ready made panegyric on his brother, who had died a few days before. "No!" answered the reverend editor, "your brother did not choose to die in our newspaper, and that being the case, I can find no room for eulogies upon him." It was a favourite saying of Bosville, which my father borrowed from him, when he wanted to give encouragement to a diffident friend, "*Il faut risquer quelque chose.*" The origin of this catch-word was a story told by Bosville of a party of French officers, each of whom outvied the rest in relating of himself some wonderful exploit. A young Englishman who was present, sat with characteristic modesty in silence. His next neighbour asked him why he did not contribute a story in his turn, and being answered, "I have done nothing like the feats that have been told us," patted him on the back, and said, with



a significant look, "*Eh bien, Monsieur, il faut risquer quelque chose.*" Some one asked Mr Bosville whether he intended purchasing "the new Baronetage?" "No," replied the humourist, "I am waiting till the *Squirage* comes out;" a work then mentioned in derision, but now printed with success.

Among Mr Bosville's liberal friends, was the noted author of "the Political Register." While Cobbett was in Newgate, my grand-uncle went in state, with four horses to his carriage, to visit the prisoner; and afterwards presented him with a thousand pounds in token of sympathy, as he termed it, with the persecuted sufferer. The party in Welbeck Street, as may be supposed, never stood very high in favour of the government. The butler one day whispered to Mr Bosville, after dinner, that some gentlemen insisted upon seeing him in the anti-chamber. Going out to them, he found his friend Townshend the police-officer, and his myrmidons, in quest of two noted democrats then actually seated at the dinner-table. Bosville received "the gentlemen" with great civility, and offered them refreshments if they would not interrupt the socialities of the dining-room, pledging himself to be security for the objects of their search. These functionaries appear to have been almost as accommodating as the bailiffs who so obligingly augmented the retinue of Sir Richard Steele, at his memorable entertainment. Having made this arrangement, Bosville returned to table without the slightest symptom of discomposure,

and prolonged the entertainment till the usual hour. While the company were withdrawing, the bailiffs were allowed to execute their office, and carried off the astonished guests to prison.

The concluding days of Bosville are a melancholy evidence of the force of habit. He wished his dinner-parties to be continued to the very last. His health declined, and his convivial powers deserted him ; but the slate hung as usual in the hall, and he felt more anxiety than ever that the list of guests upon it should not fail of its appointed number. Habitually inclined to scepticism, he was not prepared, amidst increasing infirmities, to seek for comfort in religion. Even during his last hours, when he was confined to his chamber, the hospitable board was regularly spread below. He insisted upon reports from time to time of the jocularities calling forth the laughter which still assailed his ear ; and on the very morning of his death gave orders for an entertainment punctually at the usual hour, which he did not live to see. It would be well for those who think that religious consolations are easily attainable on a death-bed, and without habitual preparation, to take solemn warning from the last moments of Bosville !

Sir John and Lady Sinclair, after a short residence in London, settled in Edinburgh. Their house was for some time in the Canongate, which had not then been deserted by the Scottish gentry. Their establishment was in some degree patriarchal, as Lady

Janet (Sir John's mother), as well as his sister, who afterwards married Lord Polkemmet, a Senator of the College of Justice, his two daughters, and his niece Miss Campbell, resided under the same roof. In his choice of Edinburgh for the permanent abode of his family, the baronet was determined by partiality for his native country, and for the system of tuition pursued in the Scottish metropolis ; combining the advantages of a public and private education. After the death of Lady Janet, who was attached to her old house in the Canongate, he removed to Charlotte Square in the New Town. From the time when this addition to the city was begun, my father anticipated its future extent. In this respect he differed from the historian Hume, who, some years before, while he resided at the corner of St Andrew's Square, thought that Edinburgh had reached its maximum, and used to tell his friends, " Mark my words, not one of you will live to see this square finished." \*

\* The facetious Lord Bannatyne assured me, that one of the streets leading out of St Andrew's Square was, by a strange misnomer, called St David Street, in compliment to the Historian. During the discussion of the subject by the civic authorities, the simple name of David Street was considered vulgar, and the prefix of Saint was added to give it consequence. When the resolution was adopted, one of the bailies, happening to meet Hume, asked him to guess what honour had been conferred upon him. Hume confessed his inability to conjecture. " You will be surprised," continued the bailie, " to hear that we have made a ' saunt ' (saint) of you !"—" That," answered

The chief disadvantage of a home in Edinburgh was the frequent separation between my father and his family. Almost every year he visited Caithness, and went once or twice to London. These frequent and long journeys might seem almost incompatible with the numerous and elaborate literary undertakings in which he was perpetually engaged. But he carried all the necessary books and documents along with him, that he might regularly pursue his occupations at every stage. Scarcely had he arrived in London, Edinburgh, or Thurso, when his library-table was covered with papers and letters to such an extent as might lead a visitor to infer that he had been closely engaged in literary labours for a month at least. He rose at seven in the morning during summer, and at eight in winter, usually dictating to his clerk for an hour or two before breakfast. No sooner was the breakfast ended than he resumed his labours, and continued them, if possible, till two or three o'clock, when his studies were followed by exercise. His usual walk, when resident in Edinburgh, was to Leith; and it was among his favourite sayings, that, whoever touched the post at the extremity of the pier, took an enfeoffment of life for seven years. After dinner he

David, "*is the very last honour I ever expected to receive!*" Hume did not always admit his principles to be so bad as they were suspected to be. A letter was one day brought to him, addressed "*To Hume the Atheist.*" "*Take that letter to Lord Kames,*" was his answer to the bearer. Henry Home, Lord Kames, was author of the "*Sketches of Man.*"

resumed his occupations, and, with the exception of a short interval for tea, continued them till ten o'clock.

His numerous journies and extensive correspondence brought him into communication with vast numbers of all classes and professions. The Abbé Gregoire, therefore, had some reason for affirming that "the Chevalier Sinclair was not only the most indefatigable man in Europe, but the man of the most extensive acquaintance." In his journeys between London and Caithness, my father seldom went directly along the great North road, but often diverged to the right or left, that he might visit the most eminent agriculturists, whether tenants or proprietors. He thus made himself acquainted with the most approved systems of husbandry, and could consult the ablest practical farmers on any question respecting which he wished for information.\*

During these journies the patriotic baronet availed

\* The following characteristic passage occurs in a letter from my father, dated Edinburgh, to George Dempster, Esq., so long member for Forfar :—"I arrived here the other day, after attending the sheep-shearing festivals at Woburn and Holkham. I afterwards went to see the farms of Mr Bailey of Chillingham, and Mr George Cully, at Eastfield, Northumberland ; thence to Mr Robertson's of Ladykirk, and then to Mr George Rennie, at Phantassie, in East-Lothian, with a view of comparing the English and Scotch systems of husbandry. I have no doubt of the superiority of the latter. I proceed north in the course of a few days ; and if I return by the coast road, shall not neglect paying you my almost annual visit at Dunnichen."

Dated 8th July, 1812.

himself of many opportunities to impart as well as receive useful suggestions. Valuable results occasionally followed from his happy talent of improving the most casual occurrences. One day, strolling among the romantic scenery near Kenmore in Perthshire, he entered into conversation with a respectable man named Macnaughton, of whom he asked some questions relative to sheep-farming in the neighbourhood. In particular, he enquired how the wool of the district was disposed of. The conversation that followed, and its consequences, are thus given by a gentleman who, some years after, visited Kenmore. "While seated in Mr Macnaughton's house, my attention was attracted by the sound of machinery ; a circumstance rather unusual in the Highlands. Upon enquiring what it was, Mr Macnaughton said, 'It is the noise of my spinning-mill.' I expressed my surprise to find a mill in so remote a district. 'Well,' said he, 'you will, I dare say, be no less surprised when I tell you how it came to be set a-going here. Some years ago I accidentally met with a gentleman travelling in this quarter, who, after several questions, said to me, 'Do you not think a spinning-mill would find employment in so populous a district?' I said that I did not know, but at any rate there was no one in the place likely to undertake it. He enquired, 'Would you have any great objections to make a trial of it yourself?' I replied that my circumstances would not afford running so great a risk ; for, in the event of not succeed-

ing, it would ruin me. ‘Well,’ said he, ‘but would you make a trial, if assistance were given you?’ After a little hesitation, I answered that I would have no great objection, provided another took the risk also. At this the gentleman seemed quite satisfied, and desired me to make immediate preparation for having the mill set agoing, assuring me that he would take the responsibility upon himself. So I set about the matter, got the mill you now hear set up, and now I have two additional ones in the district at no great distance, and all in regular employment; and,’ continued he, perceiving my astonishment, ‘you will be yet more surprised still when I tell you that the gentleman had no personal interest whatever in this part of the country. He was an entire stranger here.’ ‘And what is the gentleman’s name,’ I asked, ‘for I know of one, and but one to whom this extraordinary circumstance would apply.’ ‘Why,’ said Mr M<sup>c</sup>N., ‘he is a proprietor in Caithness, and told me his name was Sir John Sinclair.’ ‘Well,’ I observed, ‘that is the very individual I had in view, and this I know is but one of many such endeavours of his to improve the country; but,’ said I, ‘have you ever shared the profits with Sir John?’ ‘As to that,’ said he, ‘it was no part of the bargain!’ ”

Another incident somewhat similar occurred in a still more remote district. Sir John was crossing the little ferry in Sutherland, when the weather was so exceedingly rough that the boat was in great danger

of being swamped. He immediately began to consider how this narrow but dangerous passage might be avoided. It occurred to him that a mound might be thrown across, with a flood-gate so contrived as to open at low water for the egress of the rivers, and shut out the return of the tide. By this means he calculated that not only the inconvenience of the ferry would be removed, but many acres of valuable soil be gained from the sea. The plan was afterwards successfully adopted, among other munificent improvements executed by the Sutherland family; and a mole, at least a mile in length, now unites the two shores.

From the notices above given of Sir John Sinclair's travels in the north of Europe, and of his domestic life after his second marriage, I now resume my account of his political history. He continued for some time a supporter generally of the Administration. He felt a strong personal regard for the young Premier, and considered him an able and patriotic statesman; but would not permit his zeal as a partisan to blind his judgment, or to compromise his independence. Some important measures adopted by the Minister were so decidedly opposed by my father as to produce gradually an estrangement between the friends. Sir John, as we have already seen, much disliked the Westminster scrutiny: he also anticipated great difficulties in Mr Pitt's plan for a commercial union with Ireland: he disapproved of some points in the East



India bill ; he regarded some of the taxes for defraying the interest of the funded debt as ill advised and impolitic. So far back as February 1785, he wrote a letter to the Premier, expressing, in strong terms of friendship, his anxious wish that he would reconsider some of the measures just mentioned. In this communication, of which the first draft is all that now remains, he represents to Mr Pitt that the Westminster scrutiny made the government unpopular, and was more and more regarded as an act of harshness and personality towards a rival ; besides, that many of their common friends had, in the last division, voted with the Opposition, and might gradually be drawn over to that side of the House. He suggests a mode by which, as he conceived, the scrutiny might be honourably abandoned ; adding, that he was the more alarmed on this subject from the probable difficulty of carrying the East India bill and the Irish propositions. After stating some strong objections to the latter measure, he concludes, “ What I most *earnestly implore* is, that you would mention, in the opening of the business, that if the plan proposed occasions any alarm, apprehension, or jealousy in this country, it is your intention to bring in a bill, not for carrying the propositions into effect, but for appointing commissioners to meet with commissioners on the part of Ireland, for settling so important an arrangement.”

To these grounds of difference another was now added in the impeachment of Warren Hastings. Sir

John conceived that the Minister, in consenting to that measure, sacrificed, to his own ease and comfort, and to the security of his administration, a meritorious public servant, who, while we were losing by imbecility and mismanagement our western colonies, had by his energy and prudence preserved our empire in the East. The Minister, he thought, showed neither firmness nor public spirit in this endeavour to divert attacks from himself, by encouraging a powerful and exasperated Opposition to exhaust their strength and talents upon the late Governor-General of India. It will be in the remembrance of the reader, that, on the first charge, Mr Pitt defended Hastings; but that, on the second, namely, the treatment of Cheyt Sing, Zemindar of Benares, he surprised both the country and the House by voting against him. This surprise was greater, because the Minister readily admitted that, by the feudal code of India, the Governor was entitled to require aid both in men and money from the Zemindar; and that on account of his refusal he deserved a fine, although the fine imposed by Hastings was exorbitant. Mr Pitt's vote was considered still more surprising, because neither he himself, nor any accuser of Hastings, ever gave the slightest hint of public restitution to the Zemindar; although the money said to have been extorted was not applied to the private use of the accused, but to the public service. My father did not contemplate the proceedings against Hastings as a party measure,

more particularly as it had originated with the Opposition ; but regarded it as a purely judicial enquiry. He was indignant, therefore, that the Minister should take offence at this act of independence. He would not yield to the ministerial frown ; but, on the contrary, wrote a long letter of sympathy to Mr Hastings, expressing a high sense of his public services, and suggesting means which he hoped would put an end to an “ unjust and cruel persecution.” He then continues : “ But, after all, there are many difficulties to struggle with. I am much less afraid, however, of your open enemies than of hollow friends. I suspect that Pitt and Dundas are particularly hostile. They have never forgiven me for voting against the impeachment ; and are now so inveterate as to be actually carrying on an opposition against me in my own county, with every exertion of influence that Government can muster.” He concludes by expressing his hope, that Mr Hastings would soon attain the rank and consequence to which his public services entitled him. Allusion is here probably made to those marks of royal favour which the King is understood to have intended for the Governor-General.

It would be out of place for me to discuss further the trial of Mr Hastings. I may, however, mention that my father continued ever afterwards upon terms of cordial friendship with the individual for whose sake, conceiving him to be the victim of injustice and oppression, he had sacrificed in some degree the

friendship of a powerful minister. After the acquittal of this remarkable man, and his retirement to Daylesford, in Gloucestershire, Sir John Sinclair frequently corresponded with him upon the subject of agriculture and finance. Those who have considered Hastings merely as a grasping and ambitious despot, bent on extorting the last rupee from a distant and unprotected population, would be astonished to observe the kindly feeling, the anxiety for the comfort of the poor, and the interest in the details of rural economy, which are continually evident throughout his correspondence with my father.

In January, 1797, Mr Hastings writes, "I will venture to promise, that, if you are fortunate in the choice of your agents (and very able there are), India, and Bengal especially, will furnish you with more new materials of knowledge in all that relates to the useful arts of life, than all the societies of Europe united. I particularly specify Bengal, because it possesses a greater range of enquiry than either of the other two presidencies, and a vast field of discovery lately opened to it by the acquisition of the Sanscrit language, and the numerous writings of a remote antiquity, which are yet extant in the possession of the Bramins, and easily attainable from them."

On the 25th of July, in the same year, he renews the subject, and advises that his correspondent, then President of the Board of Agriculture, should request

Sir John Shore, the Governor-General, to cause a search by the Asiatic Society into the ancient Sanscrit records for information upon the subject of husbandry. He bestows upon Sir John Shore a commendation, which he himself deserved, that of possessing "a liberal mind, capable both of extending its operations beyond the present bounds of his official charge into the researches of science, and of making their results useful."—"I regret exceedingly," he adds, "that it never occurred to me to make enquiries concerning the husbandry of that country, as I have reason to believe that it is conducted upon excellent principles; though there, from the poverty of the cultivators, who are almost of the lowest rank in society, and from the inconsiderate rapacity of their landlords, and of others placed in occasional authority over them, they are not always perhaps applied so completely as they ought to be."

In the year 1795, when a scarcity was apprehended, Mr Hastings wrote a letter to my father, suggesting a plan, "not," he says, "as the means of remedying that evil, which I hope has no existence, but as the means of remedying the effects which proceed from the belief of it." The plan is not stated; "but," says he, "I should be sorry that it were published, because that part of it which may lay claim to any thing like argument, ought most especially to be kept from the public eye; since every suggestion of a probable insurrection of the people deduced as a

consequence from an assigned cause, is in effect a justification of it. As to myself," he adds, "perhaps no man living feels less inclination to obtrude himself on the notice of the world."

In the same year, Mr Hastings gives some insight into his own political sentiments, and offers, with much delicacy, advice to his correspondent, which might perhaps have been advantageously adopted. "I have followed your movements in Parliament with a constant and interested attention, and early foreboded the failure of your bill for a general enclosure. No man can estimate more highly than I do Parliamentary independence; and I am afraid that, if I had had a seat in the House of Commons, I should have thought it my duty to give my vote generally on that side which you appear lately to have chosen. Yet I should have been pleased in every such instance to hear your voice opposed to my own; and if I had the happiness to be numbered amongst the friends of Sir John Sinclair, I should avail myself of that privilege to say to him, that the interests of which he has charge are too great to be sacrificed to any other consideration of general obligation."

My father paid a visit at Daylesford shortly before the death of Mr Hastings, and was delighted to find the fallen statesman neither regretting the past, weary of the present, nor apprehensive of the future. He was occupied with philosophical investigations, full

of cheerfulness, notwithstanding the vast amount of obloquy and ingratitude which had been heaped upon him, and supporting with Christian patience and resignation the infirmities of declining years. Many were the transitions which, during his long life, Sir John witnessed in respect to popularity and public estimation ; but the history of Warren Hastings, in his opinion, presented the most remarkable of all. He remembered the time when Hastings, charged with the darkest crimes—an object of general detestation, stood at the bar of the House of Commons, a thin, sickly, broken-down man ; and preparatory to his unfortunate defence, addressed extemporaneously an auditory consisting chiefly of declared enemies or of doubtful friends, in the simple but affecting words : “ I am well aware that my fortune, my liberty, my life, my personal honour are too insignificant to occupy the attention of this august assembly ; but I am forced into my present situation.” And my father lived to hear that the same man, then arrived at fourscore, on being called to the same bar as an adviser, where he had once stood as a culprit, was received with acclamations by the whole senate, who spontaneously rose to do him honour.

In consenting to the impeachment of Warren Hastings, as well as in carrying on the Westminster Scrutiny, and the other measures before adverted to, Mr Pitt acted contrary to the opinion, not only of Sir John Sinclair, but of many old and attached friends, who,

notwithstanding their dislike of "the Coalition," were obliged frequently to vote against him. My father now began to think that long possession of power at an early age was gradually exercising an injurious influence upon the mind and character of the Minister. He was alarmed to see almost unexampled power wielded in the legislature by a young man whom he considered arbitrary, dictatorial, and impatient of advice. Under these circumstances, as he could not conscientiously connect himself in public life with Mr Fox and Lord North, he endeavoured to form an intermediate party, which, free from the bitterness of the regular Opposition, would still exercise a salutary control over the measures of Administration. This third party consisted of Lord Rawdon (afterwards Marquis of Hastings), Mr Rolle (afterwards Lord Rolle), Mr Bastard, member for Devonshire, Mr Loveden, member for Abingdon, Sir John Macpherson, once Governor-General of India, and other country gentlemen. From their adherence to neither party, and their occasional hostility to both, this body gradually acquired the title of "the Armed Neutrality." The ties which united this association were but few and feeble—indeed so feeble, that among its rules there was an actual provision that every member should at any time be at liberty to withdraw his name without any imputation of having left his party or deserted his principles. Mr Bastard, the mover of this accommodating resolution, privately



informed Sir John that he thought it absolutely necessary, "we," said he, "having so many *loose men*."

In 1788, my father took a leading part in forming an association to promote discoveries in Africa. Hitherto Europeans had visited Africa to plunder, to oppress, and to enslave ;—the object of this society was to promote the cause of science and of humanity ; to explore the mysterious geography, to ascertain the resources, and to improve the condition of that ill-fated continent. In furtherance of their designs, they employed able and ingenious travellers to penetrate into the interior, and collect information upon all subjects interesting to the philosopher or the philanthropist. Towards the expenses of these missions each member paid an annual subscription. The management of the funds, the choice of agents, and the business of correspondence were intrusted to a committee, consisting of the following persons, chosen by ballot :—Lord Rawdon, Bishop Watson, Sir Joseph Banks, Mr Beaufoy, and Mr Stewart. "The result of their labours," says Murray, "has thrown new lustre on the British name, and widely extended the boundaries of human knowledge. They have earned a solid and permanent glory, and have acquired higher claims to the admiration of mankind than many of those whose achievements fill the first place in the page of history."\* Their list of missionaries contains names

\* African Discoveries, vol. i. 5.

immortal in the annals of human intrepidity, those of Ledyard, Lucas, Houghton, Horneman, and Park. When Ledyard was asked by Sir Joseph Banks, "How soon will you be ready to set out?" his answer was, "To-morrow morning."

Among other papers I find the following familiar reference to a meeting of this society. "On Saturday the African Club dined at the St Alban's Tavern. There were a number of articles produced from the interior parts of Africa, which may turn out very important in a commercial view; as gums, pepper, &c. We have heard of a city where Major Houghton, our geographical missionary, is going, called *Tom-buctoo*: gold is there so plentiful as to adorn even the slaves; amber is there the most valuable article. If we could get our manufactures into that country we should soon have gold enough. Mr William Bosville was on Saturday unanimously admitted a member of the Society."\*

Many years afterwards the Baronet became a member of another Philanthropic Society, which had Africa for the scene of its operations. A letter from Sir Sidney Smith, dated Paris, 6th January, 1817, thanks him for his subscription, and states the objects of the institution to be immediately the deliverance of European captives in Barbary, and ultimately the civilisation and settlement of that savage country.

\* Lady Sinclair's uncle, before referred to.

“ Such an opening,” he says, “ for the idle and the turbulent, especially in France, would insure the tranquillity of Europe.”

It was on the Regency question, in 1788-9, that Sir John Sinclair's estrangement from Mr Pitt first became conspicuous. At the close of that year a report from the King's physicians was laid before both Houses of Parliament, declaring that his Majesty's indisposition rendered him incapable of attending to public business; that judging from their experience in similar cases, there was a fair probability of his recovery; but that no time for that happy event could be fixed upon with any degree of certainty.

This announcement, as might be expected, produced great activity among the several parties which divided the country. All of them felt that a struggle must now be made for the acquisition or the preservation of office. The party to which we have referred under the name of the “ Armed Neutrality,” began to exert themselves. My father wrote immediately to Lord Rawdon, requesting that he would come without delay to London, and received from him the following reply:—

“ Donington, Nov. 27, 1788.

“ My dear Sir John,

“ I return you many thanks for your obliging information. I agree with you that many will now close with us, who were before wavering; therefore,

as you are on the spot, sound those whom you think so inclined. Particularly advert to that body which we talked about in our last conversation. They ought to go decidedly with us, if a question comes on upon Thursday next : for we can allow them little merit if they stand by to see which side preponderates. I know not where Popham and Wotherston are to be found ; but I hope the call will bring them up. Upon Monday I shall wait upon you some time between two and four, for I shall certainly be up, although Sir W. Clinton has not moved out of the house I am to occupy. I have the honour to be, my dear sir, your very faithful servant,

“ RAWDON.”

A question of the utmost difficulty and delicacy now arose ; how to provide for the exercise of the royal prerogative ? Mr Fox, and his party, swayed by the legal opinion of Lord Loughborough, maintained that the King's incapacity amounted to a civil death ; and that the Prince of Wales was legally entitled to assume the Government. Mr Pitt, on the other hand, contended that to assert the existence of such an inherent right in the Prince of Wales, or in any one else, independently of a Parliamentary decision, was little less than treason to the Constitution. He insisted that the Prince had no more right to supply the existing deficiency in the Government than any other subject ; but at the same time admitted

that it was expedient for Parliament, under certain restrictions, to offer him the Regency.

After much discussion, Mr Pitt, in a committee of the whole House, moved the three following resolutions; “1st, That the exercise of the regal power was interrupted. 2d, That it was the right of Parliament to supply the defect; and, 3d, That it belonged to Parliament to determine the means of giving the royal assent to bills respecting the exercise of the regal power during the continuance of his Majesty’s indisposition.”

While these resolutions were under discussion in the Committee, Sir John communicated his opinion of them to his friend Bishop Watson, who thus expressed entire concurrence with his views.

“ Cambridge, Dec. 14, 1788.

“ Dear Sir John,

“ Your note followed me to this place. I like your proposition very well. It accords with my own ideas, which are, that the Prince of Wales has no right to exercise the functions of the executive power without the designation of the two Houses of Parliament, but that the Houses of Parliament have no right to give their designation to any person whatever, except the Prince of Wales. I mean to be in town on Tuesday, and am with great regard,

“ Dear Sir John,

“ Your very faithful servant,

“ R. LANDAFF.”

The opinion of Sir John and the Bishop on this intricate constitutional question seems to have been intermediate between that of the two great rival leaders. In opposition to Mr Fox, they denied the existence of an *inherent right* in the Prince of Wales to the Regency on the mere declaration by Parliament of the King's incapacity; while at the same time, in opposition to Mr Pitt, they insisted that it was not only *expedient* for Parliament to offer the Regency to the Prince of Wales, but that to no other individual could it be constitutionally offered.

Mr Pitt's resolutions passed the Committee, but when the report was brought up, Sir John embraced the opportunity to make a few remarks, and to request some farther explanations. With respect to the first resolution, "no man," he said, "could deplore its necessity more sincerely than himself. He considered the second to be unnecessary, as no motion had been made declaring the Prince's right to the Regency. Had such a motion been brought forward he would have strenuously resisted it. In the third resolution, there was something dark and mysterious. He gave the Minister credit for too much manliness of mind to suppose that he would endeavour by an equivocal declaration to entrap the House, and fetter its future proceedings; but before the bringing up of the Report, he wished all ambiguity to be removed. I am afraid," he continued, "that the two Houses will be called upon to exceed their constitutional powers;

and I am anxious, at this crisis, that no step should be taken in the dark, but that our whole proceedings should be clearly understood."

Mr Pitt replied, that he had already explained his plan when he proposed the resolutions. To supply the defect in the legislature, arising from his Majesty's indisposition, a commission was to be issued under the Great Seal, appointing Commissioners, who, with the usual forms, should open the Session in the King's name, and signify the royal assent to a Regency bill. Into that bill the Minister intended to introduce restrictions on the power delegated to the Regent; but it was clear that no such restrictions could be proposed were an address at once voted to the Prince of Wales praying him to take upon him the office. Mr Pitt, at the conclusion of his speech, insisted that the method of procedure which he proposed was alone consistent with the principles of the constitution.

In reply to this assertion, Sir John Sinclair expressed the utmost astonishment that the Minister should term such a system of measures consistent with the principles of the Constitution, when it was contrary to law. Every gentleman, conversant with the statute-law, knew, that by the 13th of Charles II., it was declared illegal for the two Houses to exercise legislative authority without the King; by the same statute also, the assertion that they had any such power was pronounced high treason in the person making it, and he was declared liable to all the pains

and penalties of premunire. "A precedent," he says, "designed to legalize an infringement of a solemn act of the legislature, and at the same time tending to overturn the most sacred principles of the constitution, cannot be justified except by the most urgent necessity—a necessity not at present existing."

Sir John insisted that the best and plainest mode of procedure was by an address from both Houses to the individual on whom all eyes were fixed, as the only proper person to take upon him the executive authority; in like manner as our ancestors had addressed the Prince of Orange at the memorable era of the Revolution. The honourable Baronet laid great stress on the distinction between *creation* and *legislation*. "If the throne," says he, "is vacant, the two Houses can create a king, as was done at the Revolution, or reestablish a royal family, as the Restoration can testify; or if the throne is full, but the king incapable of acting, and if no remedy has already been provided to supply that defect, the power of nominating a representative of the Crown to act in such an emergency seems naturally to devolve upon them. On this distinction," he added, "between creation and legislation, the very existence of the monarchy depends. For if it be held as an unalterable law of the land, that the two Houses must have a supreme or executive Magistrate, whose assent, either by himself or by a proxy, is essential to the validity of their acts, the sceptre must for ever remain secure; whereas,



if once the theory be discovered, and boldly acted upon, that any phantom, or pageant, set up by the two Houses, and obeying their injunctions, can answer the purposes of legislation, as constitutionally as a monarch, or third estate, it is impossible to say to what extravagant length men's ideas may be carried, regarding the inutility of that branch of the legislature. The next step will be, to dispense with that branch altogether."

The Report was received, and the resolutions transmitted to the Lords for their consideration. Mr Pitt afterwards named the day on which he would propose his plan of a regency.

On the arrival of Lord Rawdon, the "Armed Neutrality" had frequent meetings, and through the intimacy of that nobleman with the Prince of Wales, had ready access to Carlton House, so that the intended change would probably have placed its leaders high in office. On this point, Mr Bastard thus writes to Sir John (21st Jannary, 1789), "I hope every thing at that meeting was entirely to your satisfaction, and that the foundation was laid of the country's benefiting by your having some official situation of the first rank, in which those talents which are already known to the world might have full scope for action. I shall always rejoice in every good which attends you, though one of my greatest pleasures in Parliament would be to run in the same political tract together."

The day on which Mr Pitt had pledged himself to

lay before the House his plan for a regency, was the sixth of January. On the fifth, the "Neutrality" dined together, and were joined by Mr Loveden, who had arrived that morning from Berkshire. In the course of conversation with my father, this gentleman stated that his constituents at Abingdon were greatly dissatisfied with the proceedings in Parliament, and wished much for another examination of the physicians as to the state of the King's health; adding, that if Sir John would second him, he would move next day for another examination. The least difficulty started by my father would have prevented the motion; but it appeared to him, that as the nation had not suffered from previous delays, a short additional delay was not likely to be detrimental. Four weeks had elapsed since the physicians were examined; and reports were in circulation, that their opinions were not faithfully communicated to the public. Sir John therefore encouraged Mr Loveden to bring forward his proposition.

Next day, accordingly, on the motion of Mr Pitt, that the order of the day be read, Mr Loveden rose, and having dwelt upon his known independence, moved, to the astonishment of both parties, that the physicians be called in to inform the House whether the symptoms of the King's health were such as gave reason to hope for his Majesty's speedy recovery.

This proposal, however unexpected, was not very unwelcome to either party, though neither would

have ventured to bring it forward. Mr Pitt hoped that the King might recover during a minute and protracted examination; while Mr Fox appears to have expected that the report would be so decisive as to the permanence of the King's malady, that all pretence for restrictions would be removed.\* After a feeble opposition, Mr Pitt consented to withdraw the question of the order of the day, and himself moved for a Committee to examine the physicians. A delay of eleven days in the progress of the Regency Question was thus obtained; and in the mean time, while the Bill was in progress through the House of Lords, its necessity was obviated by the King's recovery. The intervention of Mr Loveden proved as important as it was unexpected. Had the Bill thus impeded passed into a law, and had the Regent actually assumed the government, a new Administration and a new line of policy would have inevitably been the consequence. The King is well known to have declared, that under these circumstances, no earthly consideration would have induced him to resume his office. How must it have contributed to his tranquillity, when the clouds which overshadowed his reason had passed away, to

\* From a letter to Mr Perceval, I find that, in 1810, when the Regency Question was again under discussion, my father took the same view with Mr Fox in 1789, and considered the probability of the King's recovery to be the best justification of restrictions. In the latter instance, as his Majesty had more than once recovered from short illnesses, there was reason to hope that his disease would not be permanent.

find the same friends in power whom he had been accustomed to confide in, and the same measures in progress which had received his approbation ! \*

Before leaving the Regency Question, I may introduce a letter to Sir John from W. Payne, Esq. Private Secretary to the Prince of Wales, which illustrates the feelings of his Royal Highness upon that important subject, and at the same time notices those intrigues commenced a year before to disturb my father's interest in his native county ; which intrigues I have already mentioned as having originated in his independent conduct at the trial of Hastings :—

“ Dear Sir,

“ I take the earliest opportunity of expressing my concern at any probable cause of disquiet to you, which may arise from the meditated opposition to you in the north, and which regrets I am directed to convey to you on the part of the Prince, who will feel himself very happy in being of any service to you. I shall therefore beg to hear from you, whenever any specific exertion of his may be useful to you, and to assure you, that I am persuaded he will readily embrace the occasion whenever it offers.

\* Writing to my father in 1798, Sir John Macpherson says —“ The recovery of the King saved us from a civil war. I wished the Prince at that time to send for the opposite chiefs, and force their attention to the common danger. The French Revolution did what he might have done—it brought Pitt and Portland together.”

“ I feel great pleasure from the sanguine hopes you entertain of success, in spite of all the efforts that are used against you, which I trust will be with you (as we hear from many of our friends in different parts of the country) daily enfeebled. I think people’s eyes are opening fast, and the *tyranny* of the present *reigning youth* will and must diminish his sway very speedily.

“ I hope we shall soon meet in town, as I think all hope of a dissolution seems to be at end with Mr Pitt, and every month, I think, becomes of serious consequence to him. I am, with great regard, dear sir, your most faithful and obedient servant,

“ J. W. PAYNE.

“ Pavilion, Brighton, Oct. 14.”

Among the questions agitated at this time, both in and out of Parliament, was the abolition of the Slave Trade. On the laudable exertions of those truly Christian patriots, who, with so much energy and perseverance, laboured to put down that odious traffic, it would be needless to enlarge. The name of that great and good man, William Wilberforce, will occur to every reader as the champion of the oppressed African, in the long struggle which preceded the final triumph of humanity.

Sir John Sinclair had been intimate with Mr Wilberforce for many years, and agreed with him in his general principles, although he differed from him as

to their application. He conceived the plan of the abolitionists to be sweeping and precipitate; and thought that, where the interests of the several parties were so complicated, caution was peculiarly necessary. On the 26th of March, 1791, after the subject had been repeatedly debated in Parliament, Sir John wrote a letter to Mr Wilberforce, containing a distinct statement of his views. As moral principle was here in question, he attaches comparatively no importance to the inevitable losses which the shipping interest would sustain by the annihilation of a lucrative trade; nor even to the fact, that the cultivation of the West India islands must remain stationary, or might even retrograde, if no fresh importation of slaves from Africa were permitted. He anticipates, however, with much apprehension, that a very difficult and delicate question would certainly grow out of the abolition, as to the emancipation of the slaves then in our colonies. "If," he asks, "you abolish the trade in slaves, how can you, with consistency, retain in slavery the negroes now in the West Indies?" He also apprehended that, if other nations did not concur with us, the trade would be *transferred* rather than *abolished*; and perhaps transferred to parties who would carry it on with greater vigour than ourselves. He therefore proposed that other Christian powers should be solicited to combine with us in this great philanthropic work; and that a loss, which humanity ought not to regret, should be shared alike

by all. "The abolition," says he, "must be universal, otherwise it will be inoperative. It will be a sacrifice injurious to ourselves, and useless to those whom it was meant to benefit."

Among the most valuable services to the public, performed by Sir John Sinclair, was the establishment of a society for improving British wool, an institution which the depressed state of pastoral economy at that period rendered peculiarly necessary. Wool had for centuries been the staple commodity of Great Britain. The duties upon this production had, from the days of the Plantagenets and the Stuarts, formed a considerable branch of the royal revenue; and numerous laws upon the subject had been enacted both by the English and Scottish Parliaments. At the same time, however interesting as a natural production, however valuable as a necessary of life, or however lucrative as an article of commerce, wool, previous to the year 1790, had not received attention either from scientific or practical men suited to its great importance. Not a single individual throughout Europe, with the exception of M. D'Aubenton, keeper of the royal flocks in France, had adequately united theoretical with experimental knowledge. Particular breeds of sheep had been improved to a considerable degree, both at home and abroad; but the improvement did not result from any well-digested system. Physiologists also had a general acquaintance with the natural history of the animal;

with its comparative anatomy and peculiar habits, as developed in various districts and countries of the world ; but the effects of climate, food, and management had not been accurately ascertained, nor had any work been published which could sufficiently instruct the shepherd how to manage, much less how to improve, the stock intrusted to his care.

The pernicious consequences of this prevailing ignorance and neglect were beginning to be severely felt both by the wool-growers and woollen manufacturers of Great Britain. In consequence of improper treatment, the quality of British wool had been progressively deteriorating. The use of turnips and other coarse aliments had communicated an increasing coarseness to the texture of the fleece. Importation had augmented ; and the British isles were becoming daily more dependent on foreign imports for the finer fabrics ; a dependence the more alarming, as Spain alone could at that time furnish us with the raw material. Previous to the war with Spain, the average import of Spanish wool amounted to two millions of pounds ; the amount then sunk to half a million, showing that the necessary supply could not be obtained. After the peace, the import rose in 1787-8 to upwards of four millions, proving an increased dependence on that country. A war with Spain, therefore, it was evident, might deprive our manufacturers of a material indispensable to the fabrication of their most valuable cloths.



A very serious question now arose, what measures should be adopted for the removal or diminution of this national evil. On directing his attention to the subject, it appeared to Sir John Sinclair a surprising fact, that the Shetland Islands, situated several degrees north of Edinburgh, should produce a description of wool adapted to the softest and finest fabrics; and he felt anxious to ascertain the reason of that peculiarity. An accidental meeting with a clergyman from Shetland, who was attending the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland at Edinburgh, afforded him an opportunity. From this gentleman he obtained much valuable information, which he communicated to the Highland Society of Scotland. This public-spirited body nominated a sub-committee, of which our agricultural baronet was appointed chairman, to make enquiries into the subject of Shetland wool. On the 23d of July, 1790, this committee gave in a very able and accurate report, drawn up by their Chairman, and accompanied by letters from Dr James Anderson, an eminent agriculturist, and from two ministers of Shetland. The limited funds of the Society, however, were expended on so many other important objects connected with rural economy, that a sufficient sum could not be appropriated to enquiries and experiments so extensive as those which Sir John Sinclair had in view. He resolved, therefore, to institute an association, having exclusively for its object the improvement of British

wool. He wrote letters to a number of landed proprietors, developing his plan, and soliciting their co-operation. A large meeting of individuals interested in the subject took place accordingly at Edinburgh, on the 31st January, 1791, who formed themselves into a society for the important object specified. To this new institution, the Highland Society delegated the care of the wool and woollen manufactures, and transferred to them the property of the sheep which it had procured for purposes of experiment.\*

On being elected Chairman, Sir John Sinclair delivered an address, which he was requested to publish, as a valuable exposition of the design of the institution. In this paper he commences with stating some questions, at that time undetermined, respecting pastoral economy, and with regard to which much ignorance and prejudice prevailed; and, in particular, he animadverts upon the gratuitous assumption that all attempts to produce fine wool in Scotland were a vain

\* Among those who from the first saw the great importance of the Society was the celebrated Bakewell. In a letter to my father, dated Dishley, 7th April, 1791, he says, "I shall stay in London a few days (at the Swan Inn, Lad Lane), and will take the liberty of waiting on you, and of conversing on that important subject, on which you are so laudably engaged, and shall think myself very happy in rendering you any service in my power, considering the improvement of the fleece and carcase, as of very great consequence, not only to the landowners, but to the manufacturers of the kingdom." He afterwards suggests some sources of information, of which he hoped my father would avail himself.

and impotent struggle against nature. He proceeds to explain the objects which the Society should have in view, namely, to collect specimens of the best breeds, foreign and domestic ; to disperse them, by way of experiment, over the whole kingdom ; and to excite generally a spirit of improvement in this department of national industry.

Among his numerous calculations to show the value of sheep-farming, he remarks, that about 100,000 head of cattle were sent every year from Scotland to England, and that to keep up this supply, a stock of three hundred thousand was required. The same quantity of pasture, he argued, that supported these cattle, would maintain 1,200,000 sheep, affording an equal quantity of meat, and at the same time several million pounds weight of wool.

With the view of drawing general attention to the newly-formed institution, the Chairman resolved to hold a grand sheep-shearing festival, a kind of exhibition at that time without example, although now familiar to the public. The place fixed upon for the meeting was Newhall's Inn, near Queensferry, about ten miles from Edinburgh. The cotemporary journals describe at great length the preparations made for this fête, and the enthusiasm which it called forth. All the company wore pastoral decorations of various sorts. Sheep of different breeds were exhibited, with specimens of their wool ; the process of shearing was performed by rival clippers from all parts of the coun-

try ; a collation followed, and the Chairman's toast, " the Royal Shepherd of Great Britain, and success to his flock," was answered by a salute of twenty-one guns from the Hind frigate, then at anchor in the Frith.

The first object of the Society was to procure specimens of sheep from all quarters. No exertion of influence, no expenditure of money was spared to make this collection complete. Nobility and gentry, farmers and amateurs, outvied each other in their contributions to the flock of the Society. Sir John presented 100 sheep, which he had himself already procured, and which included the Spanish, the Herefordshire, the Southdown, the Cheviot, the Lomond, and the Shetland breeds. The eminent experimentalist, M. D'Aubenton already mentioned, sent from Burgundy, at the request of the Chairman, specimens of the real Spanish sheep intrusted to his care by Louis XVI. This valuable flock, after escaping the dangers of the sea, encountered still greater perils on their landing. They were seized upon at Brighton by the Customhouse officers, who, in virtue of some obsolete and barbarous law, threatened to have them slaughtered for the use of the poor ; nor was it without difficulty, after a troublesome correspondence with the Treasury and Customhouse in London, that these intended victims of fiscal intolerance were liberated. King George III. honoured the British Wool Society with his patronage, and presented them with speci-

mens of rams from the royal flock. In the course of one year from its commencement, the Association, by gift or purchase, accumulated about 800 sheep, natives of all countries, from Abyssinia to Sweden, from Shetland to South Wales.

These breeds were all distributed over Scotland, being either sold or lent to gentlemen who undertook to make the experiments contemplated by the Society.

Nor were the above the only measures taken by this active and patriotic institution. Several of the members, together with the Chairman, made tours of observation among the pastoral districts to ascertain the state of sheep farming. Experienced and intelligent agents also were employed for the same purpose. Their tours, containing much valuable information with regard to all the native breeds of sheep, were afterwards published by the Society. The first of these tourists (Mr Andrew Kerr), surveyed the north of Scotland, and originated the idea that a fine woolled sheep, called "*the long hill sheep of the East Border*," might thrive amidst the hardships of a Highland pasturage. A year afterwards, three store-farmers, from the Borders (Messrs Redhead, Laing, and Marshall), were employed to ascertain the state of sheep farming in the principal counties of England. To their report Sir John annexed an account of the long hill sheep, to which he gave the name of *Cheviot*, stating as his reason that it was found in greatest

perfection among the Cheviot hills, and that he wished to name it after a district so memorable, both in the history and legends of the country.\*

In 1794, another agent (Mr Nasmyth) was sent through the southern districts of Scotland, and thus completed a circuit of nearly all Great Britain.†

After having completed this general survey, the Society discontinued its labours. The effect, however, of the knowledge thus accumulated, and the spirit thus awakened, began every where to be discernible.

The remote islands which, by the peculiarities of their pastoral economy, had suggested the establishment of the institution, first profited by its discoveries. Premiums were offered for the improvement of Shetland wool; and so much was the quality bettered, that prices rose considerably in the market, and an addition was obtained of L.3000 a-year to the rental of the proprietors.

By Highland graziers and landowners the Society ought to be long and gratefully remembered for their introduction of the Cheviot breed of sheep, which is

\* See Observations on the Different Breeds of Sheep, addressed to Sir John Sinclair, Baronet, Chairman of the Society for the Improvement of British Wool, by Messrs Redhead, Laing, and Marshall. Edinburgh: 1792.

† Nasmyth mentions, at page 24 of his Report, that even then the *long hill sheep* of the East Border were better known by the name of *Cheviots*. The short hill sheep were in some places termed the *Forest* or *Linton* breed.

now completely naturalized over the whole north of Scotland ; adding wealth to a country immemorially poor, and fertilizing immense districts previously abandoned to sterility. It is calculated that there are now about 300,000 of this breed diffused over the four northern counties alone. Both in the highland and lowland districts the rent of sheep pasture has risen out of all proportion to that of other landed property in any part of Great Britain. Farms which, while stocked with coarse-wooled sheep, or with black cattle, had been of little value to the owners, now yield a large rent ; or have been sold for many times the amount which in their former state they would have produced. This increased value has been caused in two ways. Not only do the pastures become naturally richer as sheep walks than when fed upon by cattle, but the augmented revenue of the landlord has enabled him to expend more money in enclosing, draining, and otherwise improving the soil. One estate which, under the old system, did not yield three hundred a-year, has sold for upwards of fifty thousand. Another estate, near Fort William, rose from L.150 a-year to L.1600 or L.1700 ; and the estate of Reay, which previously had produced from L.1200 to L.1500 a-year, brought no less a price than L.300,000.\*

\* See a tract by Sir John Sinclair, entitled, " Account of the Origin of those Cattle Shows," &c. p. 3. Nasmyth, in his Tour, already quoted, mentions an experiment made in 1792,

The exertions of Sir John Sinclair in extending the Cheviot breed generally throughout Scotland were gratefully acknowledged by various proprietors. "I am perfectly convinced," says Sir William Pulteney, in a letter, dated 14th January, 1804, "that the nation owes you great obligations for having introduced the Cheviot breed of sheep. I have myself profited by it. A sheep farm of mine in Annandale now pays me double rent, by changing the old sheep stock to the Cheviot."

Even in England the labours of the British Wool Society produced salutary results; not only did it extend to a high degree the knowledge of sheep farming in general, but it gave the first hint of those sheep-shearing festivals, which, by combining pleasure with utility, have proved so valuable a stimulus to the industry of the British grazier. The meetings held by the Duke of Bedford, by Mr Coke of Norfolk, and Mr Curwen of Workington, will of necessity be in the recollection of the reader.

I shall conclude this subject with a remark quoted by

by Mr Hay of Hopes, in East Lothian, to ascertain the merits of the Cheviot, as compared with the black-faced sheep. The result explains the facts referred to in the text. The Cheviot were found to be in better condition than the black-faced breed; they were also more prolific; a larger number could be pastured on the same farm; the quantity of wool produced was one-third more; and while the wool of the Cheviot sheep sold at 19 or 20 shillings per stone, that of the black-faced sheep fetched only from 8 to 10 shillings.



Dr Coventry from Arthur Young. “ The importance of improving the breeds, of whatever kind, is greater than may be at first imagined ; for, reckoning the sheep of England only at 25,000,000 : if their return was raised only one shilling a-head, the improvement would amount to L.1,250,000 annually. Those who have paid attention to these subjects must be sensible that the double is a very trifling rise indeed, in comparison with what has been effected in various districts.” \*

\* Coventry's Remarks on Live Stock, postscript, p. 8. Ed. 1806.

## CHAPTER V.

French Revolution—Meetings at Mr Windham's—Exchequer Bills—Plan of licensing Bankers—Origin of the Board of Agriculture—Arthur Young—First Battalion of Fencibles—Second Battalion—Captain Fraser—Marquess Cornwallis—Lord Moira—Exchequer Bills for the Colonies—Loyalty Loan—Thoughts on Peace—Suspension of Cash Payments—Lord Moira—Duke of Northumberland—Lord Malmesbury's Negotiations—Letter to Lord Thurlow—Neutral Party—Income Tax—Scotch Representation—Addington Administration—M. Otto—American Correspondence.

WHEN the war of the Revolution broke out, Sir John Sinclair appears to have participated in the sentiments of Mr Burke, as to the necessity of carrying it on with vigour, in the expectation of speedily and triumphantly overturning the Jacobinical government of France. By many estimable men the Revolution was at first contemplated with enthusiastic approbation and extravagant hope, as the dawn of a new golden era in the history of the world—the rise of “another nature and a new mankind.” While religionists, like St Martin, were expecting the predicted reign of righteousness, philanthropists were looking forward, with prospects no less visionary, to a political millennium. They could not shut their eyes

to the fearful prognostics of democratic triumph. The thunder of the approaching tempest fell upon their ear ; but they anticipated that the convulsion, terrible as it was, would serve to purify the political atmosphere, and be succeeded by universal calm, by freedom and social happiness. They viewed these events as a lesson to tyrants, written indeed in blood, but perhaps on that account the more instructive.

Succeeding events, however, either moderated or destroyed the hope of these sanguine speculators, and at the same time justified the alarm sounded by the original anti-Jacobins. Meetings were at this time held by the friends of Mr Burke at Mr Windham's house in Hill Street, to devise the most effectual means of arresting the progress of revolutionary principles, and to press upon Ministers the necessity of a vigorous and decisive policy. In connexion with these meetings, an incident occurred, to which my father frequently reverted as remarkably exemplifying the influence of circumstances, in themselves the most trivial, over the fortunes and pursuits of individuals. Mr Burke had proposed that the party should assemble at the Duke of Portland's (Burlington House), instead of Mr Windham's, and the latter undertook to inform Sir John of this change. Mr Windham intrusted a letter on the subject to the care of Mr Elliot, who left it at the Baronet's lodgings, without adding any particular injunction that it should be forwarded ; so that, before it came into his hands,

the decisive meeting had been held which ended in a coalition of the Portland party with Mr Pitt. The following is the document which was unfortunately so long in reaching its destination :—

“ Dear Sir John,

“ I set out this morning from Hill Street with the purpose of calling on you, which I regret that I was prevented from executing. I wished to state to you, more fully than I could by letter, the detail of proceedings that have taken place since I saw you, and the nature of the meeting to-night at Burlington House. The object of the meeting is professed to be for supporting a vigorous prosecution of war ; nor differs, that I know of, from any that might have been held at my house, except in its drawing with it an accession of strength, which could not be on any other ground. If you should feel no objection to continue at Burlington House the same course of conduct, nearly in the same company, as marked our meetings last year in Hill Street, I shall be happy either to meet or to accompany you there ; and to supply in this manner the omission of a notice which the Duke, of course, could not take upon him to send. I am, dear Sir John, your very obedient and faithful servant,

W. WINDHAM.

“ Hill Street, January 20, 5 o'clock.”

Great changes in the Administration resulted from this meeting. Several of the Portland party were admitted into the Cabinet, and others obtained inferior appointments. Overtures were afterwards made to my father, but every situation of any consequence had been disposed of in the interval, while the reason of his absence was unknown. He resolved, therefore, to support in general the measures of the Administration, and to maintain at the same time his independence. What might have been the result to him of forming a close connexion with the Ministry at this period—whether continual intercourse and familiar acquaintance with all their plans and motives would have led him steadily to support them ; or whether, on finding that the revolutionary government in France could not be speedily overturned, he would have separated from them on the questions of economy and of peace, is a point which of necessity cannot be determined.

In the year 1793, soon after the commencement of the war, commercial difficulties to an alarming extent began to prevail throughout the country. In this emergency, Sir John Sinclair's abilities as a financier were opportunely and beneficially exerted. It is to the honour of Mr Pitt that he was willing to adopt the suggestions of a former friend from whom he had been recently estranged. The necessity of energetic and well-digested measures appears from the following description of the general embarrassment

and apprehension by a contemporary annalist. "From the sudden stagnation of trade, the disappointment in the immense speculations into which the merchants and manufacturers had entered ; the sudden stoppage of the exportation to France ; the risks to which the commerce of the country must be exposed, and the alarms which the friends of Administration had excited ; a general paralysis appeared to seize the country, and the number of bankruptcies exceeded all that had ever happened in the most calamitous times. An immense number of families were reduced to beggary and ruin ; the manufacturers in several of the most flourishing towns were reduced to desperation. Several emigrated ; numbers enlisted in the army ; and such was the general distress, that each man looked upon his neighbour with suspicion ; those who were possessed of property appeared at a loss where to deposit it ; and those who experienced pecuniary distress knew not where to look for relief." \*

Having devised a method for restoring the commercial credit of the country, my father intimated to Mr Dundas that he proposed to move for the appointment of a select committee to enquire into the subject. Mr Dundas answered as follows :—

" Dear Sir,

" I received your letter respecting the state of public credit in this country. Government has been

\* Annual Register.

paying great attention to the subject. I am very doubtful of the propriety of any measure being brought forward, but I am sure, unless something definite was previously arranged, the appointment of any committee to take up the subject, loosely and without one seeing before them, might produce mischief, with very little prospect of doing good. If you have any specific ideas to state, I shall be very glad to hear them, and remain yours faithfully.

“ HENRY DUNDAS.”

In consequence of the hint in the above letter, Sir John, on the 16th April, developed his plan, in a letter to Mr Pitt, who, some days afterwards, proposed an interview on the subject in the House. To this succeeded another meeting, when the members were fixed upon for a Select Committee on Commercial Credit, to be immediately proposed.

The evil to be remedied was a sudden deficiency in the circulating medium. Many houses, which had issued circulating paper without sufficient capital, had already failed; and many more of great solidity were in danger of being obliged to stop payment from inability to convert their funds into money or negotiable securities in time to meet the pressure of the moment. Persons well acquainted with the state of commercial credit in London, as well as throughout the country, described to the committee the absolute necessity of immediate and energetic remedies; they enumerated,

without specifying names, many great mercantile and manufacturing houses on the eve of insolvency, and quantities of goods unable to find a market from the total want of private confidence. These deplorable details made a suitable impression on the Committee, and prepared their minds for my father's proposition, "that his Majesty should be enabled to direct that Exchequer bills to the amount of five millions be issued to certain commissioners, to be by them laid out, under regulations and restrictions, for the assistance and accommodation of such persons as may apply; and who shall give to such commissioners proper security for the sums that may be advanced for a time to be limited."

It was objected to this measure, by Mr Fox and his friends, that the proper mode of granting relief (if relief were to be granted) was through the bank; and that the Commissioners might exercise a dangerous influence by estimating the securities offered according to the political sentiments of the applicant.

The bill, however, passed in the month of May: twenty Commissioners, including the author of the measure, Lord Sheffield, Mr Wilberforce, Mr Pulteney, and Mr Thornton, were appointed to carry it into execution. They were to receive no remuneration for their services. In his original statement to the Minister, the ingenious projector said, "To make such a measure go down, some public spirit must be shown by individuals; and Lord Sheffield



and Mr Pulteney, I am persuaded, would join with me in taking the burden of that duty without any emolument whatever."

No sooner was the intended issue of Exchequer bills made known to the public, than Sir John received letters from all quarters, expressing approbation of the plan, and urging despatch. "Some scores of manufacturers," says Mr Cock, "have come to London from Manchester, Scotland, &c. in anxious expectation of getting some of the bills." He afterwards entreats my father to get the bill printed before it was committed; a plan which he conceived would make a difference of some days. "And as I am impressed," he adds, "with a strong conviction that even a few days may be at this crisis a great object, I hope you will excuse my suggesting to you how important it is that this or any other arrangement which would produce despatch should be adopted."

The following letter, written by Gilbert Hamilton, Esquire, in the name of the Magistrates and leading Merchants of Glasgow, testifies the anxiety and distress prevalent at this time in the south of Scotland :

"Glasgow, 30th April, 1793.

"Sir,

"I have, in the name of the Magistrates and a number of gentlemen concerned in the commerce and manufactures of this city, to return you their sincere and hearty thanks for your early communication of a

matter of so much importance as the plan now under consideration of the committee, and they shall ever regard the attention now shown by you as a distinguished mark of your zeal for the welfare and prosperity of this country.

“ The state of this country is indeed most deplorable at present, not from want of property, but from its being locked up by a total stagnation of sales and credit; and unless some step, such as the present, is taken, and that *very speedily*, the evil will increase to a most alarming degree. The plan now proposed appears to the gentlemen here to be well calculated for the very important object proposed. At the same time, from their knowledge of mercantile affairs, and the present state of this country, they are decidedly of opinion it will not afford the necessary relief unless the first term at which these bills are to be discharged should be extended, say, to the 30th November instead of 31st August, as it will be impossible for the merchant and manufacturer to be able to convert their property so as to answer the first payment, if it is made so early as the 31st August.

“ The extension of the sum from three to five millions is of great importance, as it will sooner and more effectually operate the relief intended. And it is also of the utmost importance to this country that the advance on the deposit of goods should not be confined to London, but should be extended to Scotland. In your letter you mention Port Glasgow, but if this

could be altered to Glasgow and its ports, it would be of much more real use, as Glasgow is the centre of the whole manufacturing part of this country; and the goods could with more facility be received and examined, and the business conducted more perfectly than at any other place. In the event of this (which is a matter of great consequence) being agreed to, or even if Port Glasgow were to be adopted, the Commissioners should be named here, as they would be better judges both of the applications and of the circumstances of the applicants, and the nature and extent of their trade, than could be done by persons not residing in this part of the country.

“ We have no doubt of manufactured goods being received as well as the raw materials at the port of importation; and therefore we hope this, upon being properly stated, will be granted, as, unless manufactured goods are received, it will give no effectual aid; and, indeed, all the gentlemen here whom I have conversed with wish such aids only to be given on real property, and not on the security of the credit of individuals.

“ These things I have taken the liberty of stating to you as the sentiments of the people here, having no doubt of your paying such attention to them as you may think they deserve, and shall esteem it a particular favour if you would give me your opinion. Permit me, sir, to return you my own acknowledgments for this new proof of the unwearied pains you

have taken, and the manner you have interested yourself for the interests of this part of the kingdom, and trust the plan will have all the success you can wish, which will ensure the blessings and gratitude of many thousands. I have the honour to be, sir, your most obedient and much obliged servant,

“ GILBERT HAMILTON.

“ P.S.—I shall write you in a few days on your excellent plan for the internal improvement of the agriculture of the country, a subject of much importance.”

The two places where money was more immediately wanted, were Manchester and Glasgow. At the latter place, in particular, it was of the utmost moment that a large sum should arrive before a certain day, when great commercial settlements were to take place. The Exchequer bills could not be provided soon enough to meet the exigency. Sir John therefore endeavoured to prevail upon some eminent capitalists in London to anticipate the issue by the Commissioners. The following letters from Thomas Coutts, Esquire, Samuel Thornton, Esquire, Sir John Call, and William Devaynes, Esquire, will show the difficulties which, in meeting this great national emergency, my father encountered and overcame.

“ Strand, eight o'clock,  
Monday morning, 13th May, 1793.

“ Sir,

“ I have just received the honour of your card. The Minister, and the Commissioners he has appointed to manage the loan to the manufacturers, &c., are the best judges of how it may be most effectually applied for their relief and the public peace.

“ For my own part, wishing as I do to confine myself to the conduct of my private business, and little informed as to public matters, I cannot see how supplying the necessities of idle people can *for any time* be productive of good, as neither Government nor individuals can often repeat the means of such relief. If the money Sir John Sinclair proposes sending immediately to Manchester and Glasgow will set the manufacturers agoing, and employ these idle men, the benefit is evident, especially if there is a vent for these goods when manufactured, and that the load on hand is not already too heavy for the market to take off.

“ I think Government should manage this temporary aid by means of the Bank, without recurring to individual aid; but if you choose to lay my letter before the Commissioners, and that *they* should think as you do, that my advancing money to-day on their certificate, directing L.20,000 of the Exchequer bills to be delivered to me on Thursday, will be of pub-

lic use, I shall be ready for one with the money to-day.

“ I certainly do not wish to gain by this operation, neither is it reasonable any one should lose. I will therefore advance L.19,000 on the L.20,000 on bills, and on Friday they shall be sold ; and such difference or surplus as may appear shall then also be paid. And I am, sir, your most obedient humble servant,

“ THOMAS COUTTS.

“ I will require a letter from the Commissioners, signifying that what I have offered will, in their opinion, be of public utility.”

*Second Letter from Thomas Coutts, Esq.*

“ Sir,

“ I have received your letter from Mercers' Hall ; but I cannot think the business is done in terms of my letter, unless Mr Macdowal, whom you mention, is to bring me a letter from the Chairman or Board of Commissioners, to say that it is their desire, and will be of public utility my giving the assistance required. I am, sir, your most faithful, humble servant,

“ THOMAS COUTTS.

“ Strand, 13th May, 1793.”

*Letter from Samuel Thornton, Esq.*

“ Dear Sir,

“ Your letter of yesterday gave me much concern, more especially as I cannot afford the relief which you wish. I came this morning to inspect the affairs of a person in London, for whom I am much interested, and whose situation requires the almost immediate advance of a large sum. As I had not leisure to see Mr Dent, I desired my brother to communicate your letter to him; and I shall be truly happy if I can be serviceable in promoting the laudable end you have in view.

“ I have some hopes that a sale of the Exchequer bills might be made in the Stock-market on the certificate. It is at least worth the trial. Believe me, dear sir, yours sincerely,

S. THORNTON.

“ King’s Arms’ Yard, Monday morning.”

*Letter from Sir John Call.*

“ Old Burlington Street,  
Monday morning, 13th May, 1793.

“ Dear Sir,

“ Late last evening I was favoured with your note relative to the critical state of public credit at Manchester and Glasgow, and requesting my pecu-

niary assistance towards preserving peace and good order there, from L.5000 to L.20,000. No member of the state, under which we enjoy so many blessings, is more desirous of contributing to the preservation of them than myself; but the late precarious and uncommon situation of confidence and circulation hath obliged me, and those with whom I am connected, to call forth every resource, and to keep ready such unusual means of answering all demands, that neither I nor they can assist you in the pressing necessity which you state. Every individual connected with trade or money transactions must of course look to himself and his partners, with all that care and anxiety which the unfortunate state of public credit requires; and I should therefore apprehend you will not find the resource you wished for in appealing to their aid, unless a general meeting of bankers and monied men could have been called together, and a large sum have been furnished by general consent. Independent of having any considerable sum locked up in Exchequer bills (which cannot be paid in daily circulation by bankers or merchants), there will be a loss by discount; for they cannot be expected to be so low as you state, one per cent; and unless money was more plenty, it cannot be expected that individuals or houses should narrow their own bottom, and be losers also to assist other individuals or houses. The public Treasury must relieve the public distress,



if it is so pressing as to endanger the peace and good order of government.

“ The misfortune at this juncture is, that every man of money or resources has been straining every nerve for six weeks past to support himself or friends ; and therefore they are not able to come forward and lend that support which their public spirit prompts them to an earnest wish to be able to do, on such critical occasions as you have stated. That at least is my case. You will excuse the observations I have made, and believe that no man has a higher regard for your public spirit on this and many other occasions than, dear sir, your very faithful humble servant,

“ JOHN CALL.”

*Note from W. Devaynes, Esq.*

“ Mr W. Devaynes presents his compliments to Sir John Sinclair. He is very ready to give his assistance to the public at this time ; and he proposes for that purpose to advance the Commissioners immediately L.10,000 for ten days without interest, and to be repaid by them ; or to advance L.9000 on Exchequer order or bills, to be redeemed or sold within the same time, likewise without interest.

“ East India House,  
13th May, 1793, half-past 10.”

In consequence of these negotiations, the sum of L.70,000 was forthwith remitted to Manchester and Glasgow, before the Exchequer bills on which the loan was grounded could be prepared. Mr Pitt, meeting my father that evening in the House, expressed his regret that the pressing wants of Manchester and Glasgow could not be supplied so soon as the occasion demanded. "The money," said he, "will not be ready for some days." "It is already gone; it left London by this evening's mail," was the triumphant answer. Relating this anecdote, Sir John used to add, "Pitt was as much startled as if I had stabbed him."

The effect of lending Exchequer bills exceeded even the expectations of its sanguine adviser. The difficulties, not only in Manchester and Glasgow, but throughout the whole kingdom, which embarrassed the commercial and manufacturing interests, almost instantaneously vanished; credit was completely re-established, and the Commissioners, in their report, were enabled to declare that public confidence was speedily and effectually restored; that facilities in raising money were presently felt, not only in the metropolis, but through the whole extent of Great Britain; that the embarrassments surrounding the most extensive commercial houses were thus removed; and that a number of eminent manufacturers throughout the country, who had nearly stopped their works, were enabled to resume them, and afford em-

ployment to their workmen, thus preventing them from being thrown upon the public for support. This large amount of public good was effected by the issue of so small a sum as L.2,202,000, not only without expense, but with an actual profit to the nation of above four thousand pounds, which was duly paid into the Exchequer.

While the operations of the Commissioners were going forward, the indefatigable Baronet made a journey northward, to ascertain by personal observation the state of Lancashire, and of the manufacturing districts in Scotland. Deeply interested by the straits of suffering individuals, he in some instances became himself their security to the Commissioners, and incurred personal responsibility, from which he was not relieved for many years. Among the beneficial results of the loan he had suggested, none pleased him more than to perceive the gratitude of the lower orders for the impartial attention shown by Government to the interests of all classes of the community.

Among other measures which suggested themselves to my father during his journey to the north, was the necessity of increasing the capital of the two principal chartered banks in Scotland,—a measure which he recommended to the Government, and which was afterwards adopted.

In reference to Sir John's exertions on this occasion, the patriotic George Dempster emphatically observes, in a letter written some time afterwards, "I

know nobody who ought to have more weight with the banks of our island than you, from the colossal Bank of England to the pigmy banks of Thurso and Wick."

To prevent the recurrence of a calamity which, but for an unprecedented interposition of the Government, might have been destructive of commercial credit, the Baronet drew up for the consideration of Mr Pitt, "A general view of the measures to be pursued for preventing in future a deficiency of circulation." It embraced a variety of provisions, such as improvements in the warehousing system, and in the bankrupt laws; but the most important of them related to paper currency. After pointing out the advantage and necessity of notes payable to the bearer in a country where the precious metals are not produced, he proceeds to notice the restrictions by which the issue of paper money should be limited. "Though paper circulation," he says, "may be justly accounted an important source of national prosperity, yet, unless it is kept within due bounds, it may be productive of much mischief, by encouraging unbounded speculation, and by promoting, in too great a degree, public extravagance and profusion, as well as private luxury and expense.

"According to some financiers, the best restrictions would be to prohibit the circulation of any notes in England, payable to the bearer, those of the Bank of England alone excepted. But if that Bank, by

issuing its notes, is of use to the commerce of the metropolis, must not banks on a smaller scale, by the issue of *their* notes, be equally useful to smaller towns, where it would be impossible for the Bank of England to establish branches with sufficient power in the managers to supply the wants of the district ?”

He proceeds to remark, that the Bank of England had given ample security to the public by the large sums which it had advanced ; and that it actually paid for the privilege of issuing notes, by having agreed to accept from the Government a low interest for its loans. He contends that the same rule should be extended to private bankers ; and that they also should be required to give security, by holding stock in proportion to the extent of their issues.

He anticipates the objection, that if large sums were deposited in the funds by bankers, their means of carrying on business would be diminished ; their profits would be reduced ; and, being subjected to the continual fluctuations in the price of stock, they would want encouragement to carry on their dealings. To these representations Sir John replies, that, however large the sum deposited, the banker would derive advantages more than equal to the inconveniences. He would receive his dividends like other stockholders ; the credit resulting from his deposit would fill his coffers, and he would be enabled to carry on business with the money of other persons, securing, at the same time, an adequate interest for his own.

To this communication Mr Pitt replied, that the pressure of public business then absorbed his attention, and precluded the possibility of entering into the details of banking; but that he looked forward to a future opportunity of taking up the subject.

Following up this intimation, my father, some time afterwards, again called the Minister's attention to this important question, and received in answer a request that he would furnish him with the details of his scheme. Sir John accordingly sent a communication, entitled, "A Plan for Licensing Bankers." In this paper, it was suggested that no individual or company should be allowed to issue engraved notes, payable on demand, without a license for the purpose previously obtained; that these licenses, as in the case of Exchequer bills, should be granted by Commissioners; that similar securities should be required, either personal, landed, or funded; that each license should be limited to the amount of the sum for which security was given; and that the notes should be stamped or subscribed by some individual authorized by the Commissioners, so as to prevent issues beyond the prescribed number. The advantage which he expected from this measure was, that of raising public credit, augmenting the revenue, and providing for the country a safe, abundant, and, at the same time, not excessive medium of circulation. The following letter from Sir William Pulteney probably embodies the

objection of the Minister, with whom he appears to have held communication on the subject:—

“ Uxbridge, Sunday, 5th March, 1797.

“ Dear Sir,

“ I return your paper, which is very well meant, but in my opinion your regulations are not only very unnecessary, but may be attended with much mischief. No person is bound to take payment in notes ; and you may safely trust to the natural precaution of even the lowest classes that they will not accept of bad paper ; and none of the facts which have occurred in the history of this country can justify the doubts which are generally entertained on this subject, as I can most clearly demonstrate. On the other hand, if none are to act but by license, you throw power into the hands of Government which may prove very dangerous ; and the Commissioners will have salaries, and be a pretence for new places and new influence. Let trade of all kinds alone, if you wish it to thrive. Suppose, from a well-meant anxiety for the common people, no person were allowed to make shoes or stockings for them who did not take out a license and find security ; do you think they could be better served than they are now ? The same as to broad cloth and all other manufactures. I could write a volume to demonstrate the folly of these precautions.

“ I am, dear sir,

“ Your most obedient servant,

“ WILLIAM PULTENEY.”

The following is Sir John's answer to this communication :—

“ Dear Sir,

“ Nothing surprises me more than your objection to the plan for licensing bankers. In all countries but this, whatever passes for money must have the stamp of the sovereign ; and it is unfortunate that the right of issuing paper is not exclusively enjoyed by the Government here ; it would have enabled us to have paid off the national debt without taxes or inconveniences. In regard to shoes and stockings, these are articles of which every one is a judge, and no one can be materially imposed upon. But bank notes are very different, and however beautifully engraved, may not intrinsically be worth a shilling. Why not put a stamp upon them as well as upon gold and silver plate ? In short, there is no end to the arguments that might be adduced in favour of the measure, which I hope the necessity of these times will bring to bear. There is no help for difference of opinion ; but that cannot destroy the respect and regard with which I have the honour to be, dear sir, your faithful and obedient servant,

JOHN SINCLAIR.

“ Whitehall, 6th March, 1797.”

During the remainder of his long life, notwithstanding much discouragement, Sir John Sinclair perse-



vered in his endeavours to secure the public from the evil consequences of an insecure paper currency. He was never able to obtain the sanction of the Legislature or the Government to his plans, but he had the satisfaction, long afterwards, to find a number of the most eminent financiers adopting and recommending the same views.\*

After the panic in 1825, there was scarcely an individual in the kingdom who did not perceive the necessity of protecting the poor from being imposed upon by the issue of notes not representing real property; but our Legislature could discover no happy medium between one extreme and its opposite. Ha-

\* Among these was the late Mr Ricardo, who, in his "Proposals for an Economical and Secure Currency," p. 35, has the following remarks:—"In the case of Bank of England notes, a guarantee is taken by the Government for the notes which the Bank issue, and the whole capital of the Bank, amounting to more than eleven millions and a half, must be lost before the holders of their notes can be sufferers from any imprudence they can commit. Why is not the same principle followed with respect to the country banks? What objection can there be against requiring of those, who take upon themselves the office of furnishing the public with a circulating medium, to deposit with Government an adequate security for the due performance of their engagements? In the use of money every one is a trader; those whose habits and pursuits are little suited to explore the mechanism of trade are obliged to make use of money, and are no way qualified to ascertain the solidity of the different banks whose paper is in circulation; accordingly, we find that men living on limited incomes, women, labourers, and mechanics of all descriptions, are often severe sufferers by the failures of country banks, which have lately become frequent beyond all former example."

ving, in the first instance, allowed country bankers to issue notes without security, they afterwards would not allow them to issue notes at all for sums under five pounds.

The value of my father's services, in restoring commercial confidence, in a great national emergency, was fully appreciated by Mr Pitt. He sent for the Baronet to Downing Street, and expressed, in emphatic terms, his sense of obligation. "There is no man," said he, "to whom Government is more indebted for support, and for useful information on various occasions, than to yourself, and if you have any object in view I shall attend to it with pleasure."

Here was an opportunity of personal advancement which hardly any politician would have hesitated to improve; but the principal characteristic of my father's public life was disinterestedness. The same neglect of self, which had been manifest in former instances, here again prevailed. He replied to the Minister, that he sought no favour in his own behalf, but that the reward most gratifying to his feelings would be the support of the Minister to the institution by Parliament of a great national corporation, to be called, "THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE."

This was not the first occasion on which my father had proposed to Mr Pitt an establishment of the kind. The Minister had not altogether discouraged the project, but had objected to the probable expense. Indeed, on several occasions, the Ministry betrayed

great lukewarmness as to agriculture, and induced the friends of the farming interest to believe them altogether indifferent to that great source of national prosperity, as well as disposed to prefer, invidiously and exclusively, almost any other branch of industry. When my father mentioned to Mr Arthur Young his intention to move in Parliament for a “Board of Agriculture,” the future Secretary replied that it was needless to take that trouble, as there was not the smallest chance of success. This dispute ended in a curious literary wager. Mr Young betted his nineteen volumes, entitled, “Annals of Agriculture,” against Sir John Sinclair’s twenty-one volumes of “The Statistical Account of Scotland.” Soon afterwards, the Statistical Enquirer writes to the Annalist, that he is about to have a conference with Mr Pitt on the subject, and that Mr Young will certainly lose his bet. The latter replied, “You are going *to* Mr Pitt, and I am going to lose the wager; when you come *from* Mr Pitt, I shall win the wager. Pray don’t give Ministers more credit than they deserve. In manufactures and commerce you may bet securely; but they never did, and never will do any thing for the plough. Your Board of Agriculture will be in the moon,—if on the earth, remember I am to be secretary.” When Sir John announced his success, Mr Young penned the following facetious testimony of his delight and astonishment:—

“ May 19, 1793.

“ Upon my word, you are a fine fellow, and I have drunk your health in bumpers more than once. You begin to tread on land, and what I conceived to be perfectly aerial, seems much less problematical than before. Premiums might be made to do much good, but they would demand another thousand to the sum you propose.

“ Let me have your speech fully, and directly, and if you establish a Secretary on a respectable footing, do not forget the farmer at Bradfield.—I am, dear Sir, your faithful and obliged

A. YOUNG.

“ P. S.—The Annals are preparing, and shall be bound and gilt handsomely.”

As this gentleman will be frequently referred to in another chapter of my work, it may be right to mention here, that he was born near Bury St Edmunds, in the county of Suffolk, and was author of many valuable treatises connected with husbandry, finance, politics and topography. His greatest performance was the “ Annals of Agriculture,” which was extended to forty-five volumes octavo, and to which not only many great landed proprietors contributed, but also his Majesty King George III., under the homely signature of “ Ralph Robinson, farmer at Windsor.”

Mr Young's last work was a compilation from the bulky volumes of two dissenting writers, whose religious sentiments he had long adopted—Richard Baxter and John Owen.

As the Board of Agriculture originated with the subject of these Memoirs, and was fostered into maturity by his skill, sagacity, and unwearied perseverance, I reserve that institution for a separate chapter. The attention of the reader would be distracted and disturbed were I to intermix the subject from time to time with political and financial details.

I have now to present my father in a new character, which some may be surprised that a statesman and economist should assume. Early in the year 1794, Mr Pitt, in conversation, remarked upon the necessity of increasing the military strength of the country, in consequence of the gigantic efforts directed against it by the ablest enemy we had ever encountered. “Your estates, Sir John,” continued he, “are in the north of Scotland, and are inhabited, I understand, by a race of people much attached to the military profession. I am anxious, therefore, that you should raise a regiment of fencibles; and either take the command yourself, or else nominate some friend in whom you place confidence.”\* My father replied, “that he

\* The term *fencibles*, according to its ancient acceptation, included “Every man able of person to bear arms in every county of the kingdom.” The word is thus explained in an old act of the Scottish Parliament; † but in more recent times

† VI. Jac. V. sect. 86.

had never thought of becoming a soldier, but that since the public service seemed to demand his exertions in that capacity, he would not hesitate a moment to comply with the request ; and farther, that instead of restricting, as had hitherto been the rule, the service of the corps to Scotland, he would raise a fencible battalion for the service of Great Britain. Mr Pitt declared warmly his satisfaction at Sir John's patriotic zeal. Letters of service were issued, and such was the energy exerted in enlisting and training the men, that, only seven months from the date of their Colonel's commission, the regiment passed a favourable inspection at Inverness before Lieutenant-General Sir Hector Monro, and were pronounced an excellent and effective corps.\* The battalion was 600 strong ; and as both men and officers principally belonged to Caithness, they would naturally have been called the Caithness Fencibles. In compliment, however, to the Prince of Wales, whose title as Prince Royal of Scotland is Duke of Rothsay, they obtained permission to be styled "The Rothsay and Caithness Fencibles."

Their uniform was different from that of other Highland regiments. They wore tartan trews (or it has been limited to bodies of men raised in a particular district by some powerful individual who has obtained for that purpose letters of service from the Crown. Regiments of this description were first raised in 1759.

\* This was the more remarkable, as only a bounty of three or four guineas was allowed to each man.

truis), rather than the philibeg or kilt. The Colonel was of opinion that trews, or pantaloons, were worn by the ancient Gaels, or Celts, and that this costume rivalled the belted plaid in antiquity as well as in utility and elegance.\* Here, as in other instances, he embodied his sentiments in a pamphlet. In discussing this curious question, curious from the antiquity to which it reaches, and from the spirit-stirring associations connected with it, he has given proofs of industrious research, and refers to various antiquaries, as well as to a multitude of local traditions and historical anecdotes in support of his position.† Besides trews, the Caithness fencibles wore a bonnet, and a plaid across the shoulders. The ancient garb thus revived was peculiarly becoming, to the officers in particular, nineteen of whom averaged six feet in height; and from the circumstance of their procerity

\* Hints respecting the camp at Aberdeen, 1795.

† It is understood that the antiquarian Colonel propagated his opinion on this much contested point, not only in prose but in a lyrical effusion to the tune of "Are you sure the news is true." Some of my northern readers will recollect the following verse—

" Let others brag of philibeg,  
Of kilt, and belted plaid  
Whilst we the ancient trews will wear,  
In which our fathers bled."

This song was a great favourite of the soldiers, and often produced quarrels between them and the Duke of York's Highlanders, when the two regiments were quartered at Dublin, each maintaining the superior antiquity of its own dress.

received from the common people at Inverness the Gaelic designation *thier-nan more*, or the “great chiefs.” This costume is associated with an interesting anecdote in the annals of painting. My father, one day entertaining Wilkie at dinner, happened to ask what circumstance first bent his genius to painting. “Sir John,” said the artist, “it was you made me a painter. And you did so in this way : In the course of your correspondence on statistics with my father (minister of Cults), you sent him an engraving of a soldier drest in the uniform of your fencibles. The print struck my fancy so much, that I immediately began to copy it, and continued my imitation till I determined to be a painter.” Little incidents of this kind have frequently given early bias to the latent energies of soldiers, statesmen, and philosophers ; but it is the artist especially whose vividness of imagination lays him open to these juvenile impressions.

From Inverness the regiment, in 1795, marched to Aberdeen, where it was encamped to defend the city against an apprehended attack from the French armies in Holland. Here Sir John Sinclair resided about six months with his regiment—being under orders from the Commander-in-chief to take charge of the camp. At that time encampments were a novelty in Scotland : nothing of the kind had occurred for half a century. The attention, therefore, of our military economist was directed to the subject, and the result



of his investigations was, as usual, a pamphlet, containing numerous hints highly creditable to his judgment and humanity, respecting the diet, clothing, camp equipage, and personal habits of the troops. Among his memoranda an enumeration is given of every requisite for the comfort and efficiency of soldiers.

To improve the discipline of the corps, the Colonel adopted a plan well adapted to the character of Highlanders, as appealing to their high sense of honour and self-respect. He ordered every captain to produce, on the first Monday in every month, a muster-roll of his company, specifying the name, birth-place, date of enlistment, discipline, and behaviour of every soldier under his command. This paper, familiarly termed by the soldiers "Sir John's roll," was read on parade before the whole corps; on which monthly occasion the Colonel called up each man in turn before him, and stated publicly the report given of his conduct. In some instances, where the report was highly favourable, the soldier received promotion on the spot. Occasionally he made a short speech adapted to the men and to the times. An old fencible once said to me, "I well remember one of the Colonel's speeches when his roll was read. 'My lads,' says he, 'we shall soon probably have to defend ourselves from the invaders, and every man who distinguishes himself shall be recommended to the Duke of York. Preferment is open to you all without par-

tiality. Nothing shall have weight with me but good behaviour.' I still remember," continued the veteran, "Corporals Sutherland and Fisher being made sergeants by our Colonel on the parade ground."

Sir John considered the allowance made by Government barely sufficient for the clothing and subsistence of his men. Although he attached great importance to their soldierlike appearance, he would allow no stoppage from their pay to provide ornaments to the uniform; but supplied at his own expense such decorative appointments as he thought requisite. "My men," he used to say, "must be kept in a state physically capable of duty."

His kind intentions, however, were sometimes baffled by the characteristic forethought of Scottish troops. They stinted themselves, in order to lay up in store for the time when they should be disbanded. Some of them (though the fact applies chiefly to a second battalion about to be mentioned), during their period of service, are understood to have amassed, either through parsimony or industry, no less a sum than L.100 or L.120. There is a story of an old fencible who, on his return to his native country, obtained a piece of ground from his landlord, and began to erect a house upon it for his family. A passenger finding him busied in collecting stones for that purpose, asked him what he was about. "Building a house," said he, "and I am determined to have at least one good room, though it should cost me two pounds."

Hardly any man but a Highlander would consider a room costing only L.2 a luxury.

But natural affection was oftener carried to excess than prudence. The Colonel and his officers frequently interposed their authority to check the romantic exercise of this feeling. Some of the men avoided messing together, and almost starved themselves to save money for their friends: one man in particular did so, not for his parents, nor for his wife and children (which was a common case), but for his sister.

In dealing with delinquents, my father's custom was, if possible, to make persuasion do the work of fear. "Our Lientenant-Colonel," said an old sergeant to me, "was a strict disciplinarian. When any of us did wrong he showed us the articles of war; but the Colonel spoke to us in private. He told us what disgrace we were bringing upon him, upon our families, and upon our country; and threatened to expose us where we should least wish our faults to be known. Many a man would have chosen the black-hole before a lecture from Sir John."

We left the regiment at Aberdeen. It was afterwards stationed for some months at Berwick. During this period their good conduct so much conciliated the esteem and regard of the inhabitants, that a deputation of the magistrates, with the mayor at their head, waited on the Colonel to present him with the freedom of the burgh. On this occasion an old Highland gentleman, resident in the town, remarked to

him, “ If you don’t insist on taking the oaths, this will prove a mere barren compliment ; but if you do, both you and your descendants will acquire all the privileges of freemen.” Of this shrewd and well-timed hint Sir John availed himself, to the surprise of the magistrates, who had kindly offered to relieve him from the ceremonial.

In 1799, Government resolved on disbanding all fencible regiments whose services had been limited to Great Britain. The reduction of Sir John’s corps, in consequence, took place in that year on Burntsfield Links, near Edinburgh. On this occasion the salutary effects of humane attention to the comfort and discipline of the men were manifest. Although the regiment had come by forced marches from Sunderland, in bad weather, not a single soldier was incapacitated for duty. When Major-General Vyse called for a list of the sick, the adjutant replied that his list was a blank ; that there was not one sick man in the whole battalion. Every individual came forward in person to deliver up his arms.

Previous to this reduction, Sir John Sinclair, in 1795, had received a second time letters of service, and had been empowered to raise a second battalion of fencibles, whose services should extend to Ireland. The corps at first consisted, like the former, of 600 men, but was afterwards augmented to 1000. They received the name of “ Caithness Highlanders,” and served in Ireland during the Rebellion.

When the augmentation took place, a large proportion of the first battalion volunteered into the second, although now about to be employed in a country suffering from internal distractions and threatened with invasion; and although, in a prudential point of view, they might have been gainers by accepting the large offers made to them by the agents of militia corps. “I entertain,” says a military correspondent of my father, “the highest respect for your character, from having been a witness, a few years ago, to your regiment re-enlisting under your banner as soldiers, and that too at a period when they were tempted by numberless recruiting officers with higher bounties.”

The Caithness Highlanders were first quartered for two years in the province of Ulster. While stationed at Armagh, they received thanks from Viscount Gosford, in the name of the magistrates, for their uniform steadiness and efficiency. “Divided, from the necessity of the times,” says his Lordship, in his address to the Commandant, “into various cantonments, and many of them stationed in a manner most unfavourable to military discipline, they yet preserved the fidelity of soldiers and the manly rectitude of their national character. It is with equal pleasure and satisfaction we declare, that the tranquillity which this country is now happily beginning to enjoy, must in many respects be ascribed to the ready obedience and proper deportment of the officers and men under your command.”

The regiment was afterwards removed to the South of Ireland. In this quarter it exhibited the same steady discipline. Various high testimonials to this effect may be given. In a letter to Sir John Sinclair, General Sir Charles Ross uses these gratifying terms —“I have repeatedly had occasion to express my satisfaction with the Caithness Highlanders, and my opinion of their merit, which was conspicuous on all occasions. At a very critical period they conducted themselves with invariable steadiness and propriety.” Captain, afterwards Colonel Williamson, thus writes to the agent of the regiment: —“The Lord-Lieutenant” (Lord Cornwallis) “told me he admired the appearance of the men, and that, what he liked better, he heard the best report of their good behaviour on every occasion, and from every general under whom they had served.”

An incident, somewhat similar to what occurred on the reduction of the first battalion, and proving in the same manner the salutary effects of judicious management, took place at Cork, where the corps was reviewed by Viscount Lake. There was scarcely a sick man on the list, and the General declared, that although he had often heard before of regiments a thousand strong, he had never seen one till that day. In 1797, at Youghall, the whole regiment, excepting fifty men, volunteered, with characteristic enthusiasm, an extension of their service to any part of Europe.

In 1798, when contributions were made by private

persons for the defence of the nation, these brave men gave further proof of loyalty and public spirit. In a letter from my father in that year, I find him acknowledging, in terms of commendation, the receipt of two hundred pounds, made up of four days' pay from the private men, and a week's pay from the Officers, which he had remitted on their account to the Exchequer.

In 1800, Government, anxious to strengthen the standing army, encouraged fencibles to volunteer into the line. Two hundred and twenty of the Caithness Highlanders joined the expedition to Egypt: a greater number than was furnished by any other fencible corps.

At the peace in 1802, the regiment was ordered from the south of Ireland to Glasgow, and, after undergoing inspection by Sir Alexander Don, was disbanded.

My father's interest in the men and officers under his command in these battalions did not terminate with their reduction. I have now upon my table a pile of letters, not certainly models of epistolary elegance, but what was more important to the receiver, breathing the warmest gratitude from individuals whom he had raised from obscurity and destitution to independence, or had assisted in their rise to affluence. One or two examples may be extracted. Sergeant Sinclair, one of the volunteers to Egypt, distinguished

himself at the battle of Alexandria by the capture of a French eagle. No sooner was his late Colonel made aware of this exploit than he solicited the Commander-in-Chief to bestow an ensigncy on this meritorious soldier. The application was acceded to; and Sir John had afterwards the satisfaction of successfully recommending the ensign to a lieutenancy.

Another of the volunteers to Egypt, Sergeant Waters, obtained an ensigncy, on his former Colonel's recommendation, for having carried off, in the face of the enemy, a wounded officer during the retreat from Cairo.

A third case is still more remarkable. A young man, named Fraser, one day presented himself to Lady Sinclair, in the absence of Sir John, requesting her influence to obtain for him an ensigncy in the fencibles. He was an intelligent youth, but appeared in humble circumstances. In answer to my mother's application the Colonel stated, that if the young aspirant could produce the requisite complement of men he should receive the commission. Fraser was indefatigable in his exertions, and obtained the stipulated number. Not long after, he again presented himself as an Ensign to his patroness, offering to raise more recruits in the prospect of a lieutenancy. This request, also, was acceded to, and he became a lieutenant. At Aberdeen, he attracted Sir John's attention by some ingenious sketches of the camp, which indicated talent as a military draughtsman.



On the reduction of the regiment the Colonel applied in his favour to some friends connected with the India-House, who obtained for him a cadetship in the Company's Engineers. As Fraser had no funds, his friendly Colonel advanced the sum necessary for his equipment and passage to India. Fraser showed himself worthy of this patronage. He soon remitted the loan. He distinguished himself as one of the ablest officers in the service; amassed a large fortune; returned to England, where he purchased three estates in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, and Caithness; and while he lived, acted up to his declaration, that "till he ceased to exist, he never would forget Sir John Sinclair's generosity to his family and to himself."

Before concluding this account of my father's connexion with the army, I may notice two short papers, which he published, relative to the defence of the kingdom. One of them was "An Address to the Farmers of Great Britain, by the President of the Board of Agriculture; with a Plan for the more Speedy Conveyance of his Majesty's troops in the event of the threatened invasion taking place." Such was the patriotic spirit of the agriculturists at that time, that, in the county of Mid-Lothian alone, means were provided in the course of three days for the conveyance of above five thousand men, according to the plan proposed.

The other paper was entitled "Cursory Observa-

tions on the Military System of Great Britain." In this the author attributed the astonishing success of the French arms under Napoleon, in a great degree to the rapidity of their movements, and to the efficiency of their light troops. He therefore urged upon the nation the wisdom of profiting by the example of a scientific enemy. He suggested that each regiment should contain a greater number of light troops; and that separate corps of marksmen, or riflemen, dressed in dark uniform, should be added to the British army.

Before printing this paper, he circulated some of the hints contained in it among the most distinguished officers, with the view of exciting discussion on a subject which was not merely vitally important, but, as he conceived, too much overlooked. The answer which he received from the Marquess Cornwallis, then Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and from the Earl of Moira, will interest the military reader.

" Dublin Castle, Oct. 20, 1798.

" Sir,

" I have received your letter, dated the 13th instant, enclosing some ' Hints on Improving the Military System of Great Britain.'

" I have always been of opinion that it is of the utmost importance that the infantry of the line should be trained to move as rapidly as possible, without losing their order; and I can see no reason why every

infantry soldier, exclusive of the movements in battalion, should not also be instructed in the practice of light infantry.

“ I cannot, however, approve of the plan for composing a battalion of different descriptions of troops in the manner which you propose ; and I should even object to the present mode of attaching a company of light infantry to every regiment (which is always to be entirely separated from that corps whenever it is employed in the field), and should prefer keeping up distinct battalions of light infantry *in any service except our own*. But we are in a degree precluded from an establishment of that nature by our being under the necessity of stationing a very great proportion of our infantry in time of peace in distant garrisons, and in the worst of climates, which it would be impossible for our regiments of the line to support, if a greater number of corps were withdrawn from taking a share in the general tour of relief ; and, as the best made and most active men should be selected for the light infantry service, it would not be thought advisable to send a considerable body of such troops, at the same time, to perish in a few months in a West India island.

“ The grenadier company is formed by a selection of the largest and stoutest men from the battalion, to be employed on services in which peculiar exertion is required ; but is in every respect trained in the same manner as the soldiers of the battalion ;

perhaps it would be as well if no such establishment existed. I have the honour to be, sir, your most obedient and most humble servant,

“ CORNWALLIS.”

*The Earl of Moira to Sir John Sinclair.*

“ Donington, Nov. 5, 1798.

“ You may probably think, my dear sir, that I have confoundedly abused the latitude you allowed me when you desired I should consult my leisure in answering your letter. I never knew a man indulge himself in that convenient procrastination, without sliding into a delay of which he ought to be ashamed; an excellent excuse to make to you if you will regard it as one. There is at least merit in not vindicating one's self where one has a bad cause. You are perfectly right in your notion of the great principle of military success. Activity, much more than superiority in numbers, or in artillery, has been the source of all those triumphs which have rendered France so formidable. Of this sort of exertion the English troops ought to be more capable than the French; because the Englishman, speaking generally, is as agile as the Frenchman, and much more athletic. It must, therefore, have arisen from want of management, if the British troops have appeared in any light of inferiority to the French. I do not, however, recollect the instance in which that can be considered to

have been the case, excepting in the action at Castlebar, where our troops were so posted that they could not act or give support to each other. One important application of activity is the loose order in which the French often made their attacks, wearying their enemy by a succession of assaults, fire having a very uncertain effect on their scattered skirmishers, whilst a ball from them had a great chance of hitting some one in the mass of an army regularly formed. There are undoubtedly modes of chastising such attempts, but they are not such (depending upon cavalry) as can be employed in every position. It follows, that your infantry should be trained to act occasionally in the same thin order. I never could comprehend the advantages of forming a grenadier and a light company in a regiment. According to my conception of a soldiery, all infantry should be fit for all service in which foot can be engaged. In pursuance of this opinion, I never separated the flank companies from their battalions in the corps under me. For I trusted that a very little explanation given to the officer commanding a regiment, when one at the same time showed him the ground on which he was to act, would enable him to make a loose attack with his regiment just as well as he could with a battalion of light infantry. I might, indeed, in the course of a campaign, have detached the light companies for a particular stroke; but it would have been from the motive of employing, under that excuse, some un-

attached or secondary officer, whom I might be more inclined to depend upon than I could on any officer that happened to be at the head of a regiment.

It was, as you justly observe, activity that gave Bonaparte his superiority over the Austrians in Italy. I dare say you have heard nonsense talked (for I have) about the advantages he derived from a new system, devised by himself, of movable columns. It is not a new system; but it is moreover one which no general will ever practise, without being thoroughly punished for it, if he tries it against an officer who really knows his business. I could not, without great detail, explain this to you in phrases; but I could in five minutes convince you of it, if you looked over me whilst I made a few consecutive scratches, by a scale of measurement on paper. In this assertion I do not pretend to any particular skill. The principles of tactics are much too simple to leave room for vanity in mastering them, if one will but take the trouble to reflect upon them. Every body must comprehend, that if forty men can be brought to act upon a point where only twenty are to oppose them, two balls will have their chance of hitting each of the minor number, whilst the latter can only direct one against every other man of the greater body. This holds nearly as good when you can bring up troops in proper succession to a point of attack in which the defenders cannot be renewed. The effecting this depends on your favourite activity. There must also be calculation of

the time in which certain spaces can be marched by the troops on either side ; and above all, you must have made the observation of the usual effect of fire in certain situations, and of the ordinary degree of firmness of men in bearing it. Cavalry would be better in a plain than in your Highlands, armed with the Roman sword ; and in an enclosed country, musketry would have a decided superiority to that weapon. You might, indeed, give your Highlanders also a short firelock of wide calibre, but then the target would be embarrassing. I shall go up to town for a few days at the meeting of Parliament, just to learn what they can project about Ireland. Adieu. Believe that I have the honour to be, very faithfully, your obedient servant,

“ MOIRA.”

After the above details of a military kind, I now return to politics. I might have mentioned sooner, that a dissolution of Parliament took place in the year 1790, when my father was returned for his native county, which he continued to represent till the dissolution in 1794. As Caithness could return no member to the new Parliament, he was for some time unable to procure a seat. At length, in January, 1797, he was elected member for Petersfield, in Hampshire, chiefly through the interest of the Prince of Wales. I have before me two letters on the subject from His Royal Highness's private secre-

tary, Mr Tyrwhitt, in which it is stated that the patron of the burgh had been invited to Carlton House to complete the negotiation; and that the Prince “felt very anxious to be instrumental in adding so respectable a character as Sir John Sinclair to the House of Commons.”

While Sir John was not a member of the House, a motion was brought forward in which he much regretted that he could not take an active part. On the 11th of June, 1795, a petition was presented by his friend Lord Sheffield from the merchants trading to Granada and St Vincents, stating that, in consequence of insurrections, hurricanes, and other calamities, they were reduced to such distress as to require the aid of Parliament by the issue of Exchequer bills. The measure originally proposed by my father was quoted by the noble mover, not only as a precedent to justify legislative intervention, but as an encouragement from its success to repeat the same plan. He moved, therefore, that the petition be referred to a committee. Mr Pitt and Mr Dundas supported the motion, and expatiated on the beneficial effects which the former issue of Exchequer bills had produced on the commercial credit of the country. Mr Fox opposed the proposition, as tending to increase the influence of the crown; but a grant to the extent of L.1,500,000 was carried, and was attended by the happiest results.

On a court day in December, the same year, my



father happened to meet Mr Secretary Dundas at St James's, who pressed him to name a day for visiting him at Wimbledon. The day fixed upon chanced to be the last of the year. The party was numerous, and included Mr Pitt. Sir John remained all night ; and next morning, according to Scottish custom, resolved to pay his host an early visit in his own apartment. He found the secretary in the library, reading a long paper on the importance of conquering the Cape, as an additional security to our Indian possessions. His guest shook him by the hand, adding the usual congratulation, " I come, my friend, to wish you a good new-year, and many happy returns of the season." The secretary, after a short pause, replied, with some emotion, " I hope this year will be happier than the last ; for I scarcely recollect having spent one happy day in the whole of it." This confession, coming from an individual whose whole life hitherto had been a series of triumphs, and who appeared to stand secure upon the summit of political ambition, was often dwelt upon by my father as exemplifying the vanity of human wishes. The declaration of the same great statesman, at a later period, after he had been the object of calumny and persecution, is as melancholy, but is not surprising. " Had I remained," he said, " at the Scotch bar, I must soon have reached one of the highest judicial offices in Scotland, and might have spent a life of comfort and independence. In the important capacity

of a judge, I might have been of use to my native country ; whereas, by entering on the career of politics, I have been exposed to much obloquy, and have latterly experienced the basest ingratitude.”

Leaving Wimbledon after breakfast, Mr Pitt offered Sir John a seat in his carriage to London. On the way, the Minister introduced a conversation upon the financial difficulties of the country, and expressed much apprehension that a new loan could not be raised without serious injury to public credit. He added, that, as the Baronet had attended much to these subjects, and had written a “ History of the Public Revenue,” he would be happy, at such a crisis, to have his opinion on the measures to be pursued. In answer to this appeal, my father stated his whole views of finance, and suggested various measures to relieve the treasury from its embarrassments. In particular, he proposed an appeal to the loyalty of the nation, calling upon each individual to lend, in proportion to his income, a sum of money to the Government, on fair terms, regulated by the rate of interest at the time. Mr Pitt at once entered into the idea, which, after undergoing various modifications, was matured into the scheme known by the name of “ the Loyalty Loan,” and produced eighteen millions to the Exchequer ; without that injury to public credit which Mr Pitt had apprehended from a loan contracted at the time in the ordinary way. The following extract from a letter of Mr Coutts to the

Directors of the Bank of Scotland (dated 1st December, 1796), will throw some light upon this interesting transaction; and shows the Loyalty Loan to have been the germ from which branched the two great measures of finance soon afterwards proposed by the Premier; namely, that of trebling the assessed taxes, and that of taxing income.

“——You may easily conceive many difficulties must occur in every plan for raising a sum of eighteen or twenty millions; and Mr Pitt seemed to have collected, from the various information he had, that it could not be obtained in the usual way without depressing the price of the other funds very materially, and thus there might even be some apprehension of its not being negotiable at all. He therefore had determined by the plan, of which we shall send you enclosed a copy, to try whether the public spirit of the great incorporated bodies, and of the country at large, may not induce a voluntary subscription to a loan which, though not perhaps so beneficial as an investment made in the other funds, would yet, under all the circumstances, produce a very good immediate interest, and a certainty of considerable profit in a few years.

“We were about to have sent you this plan by yesterday's post, when we found there was still another meeting, and it was not till late last night that some of the last alterations were made.

“To those who will not be induced to subscribe by

public spirit, or by a sense of their own interest to sacrifice part of their fortunes to secure the rest, he means to apply by a tax, at least equal to what may be supposed to be lost by the voluntary subscribers; and he expects a good example will be set by men of high rank and in high official situations, as well as by the Bank of England and other corporate bodies; and that such a sum will be raised as will make it very easy to borrow what it may be short of the sum he wants in some other manner. Mr Pitt expects the subscription will sell at some discount, but he flatters himself the country will think, as he does, that a large and voluntary contribution may be the means of extricating it from the present difficulties, by showing its enemies we are not without resource.

“ While the war continues all must agree money must be had to carry it on with vigour; and the more unanimity and strength we show, the more willing our enemies will be to conclude a peace on fair and permanent conditions.”

The terms of this loan were of necessity disadvantageous to the lenders, being by its very name rather an appeal to their patriotism than their interest. They were to pay L.100 for every L.112, 10s. of stock, which stock would, at the market price, have produced only L.97, 10s., consequently they sustained an immediate loss of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent, or L.2500 on every hundred thousand pounds advanced to the public. The necessities of the State, however, required that

a considerable additional loan should be made soon after the agreement. The price of stocks, consequently, fell, and the subscribers were subjected to a greater loss than they had anticipated. As Mr Pitt had intimated to them that no additional loan would be required, he conceived that they were entitled, not in law but in equity, to a remuneration. Several members of Opposition unsuccessfully opposed this grant in the committee, but Sir John, when the report was brought up, stated various objections, and in particular, that the subscribers ought to have prayed for relief in a petition recommended by the Crown, and had less claim to compensation, as they had expected advantage from a favourable turn of affairs. On the renewal of the discussion, he put the question to the Speaker, whether members personally interested in the grant should be allowed to vote? His decision against them was fatal to the measure; and the baronet thus saved half a million to the country, though not without incurring the displeasure of the Minister and of many powerful individuals.\*

On the termination of the Reign of Terror, and the establishment of the Directory in France, Sir John Sinclair was of opinion that the time had arrived at which peace might probably be concluded without any compromise of our national dignity or interest. He derived encouragement in this opinion from his continental correspondents, and in particular from M.

\* See Corresp. vol. i. p. 106.

Maurice of Geneva, editor of the *Bibliothèque Britannique*, and from the French Director Barthelemy. The former, in a letter dated 24th July, 1797, enlarges on the division between the Directory and the Council of Five Hundred; on the exhausted state of the treasury; and on the general desire of the French nation for peace. "For the most part," he says, "peace is wished for, even peace with England; but it is believed that the Directory do not desire it, and that their pretensions would be exorbitant. It was hoped to deprive them of the means of carrying on the war. The Council of Five Hundred endeavoured, therefore, to oppose them on the head of the finances; but the Council of Ancients not having adopted the plan, the Directory remained as powerful as ever. Not that the National Treasury offers them any considerable resources, for it is understood to be exhausted, and the pretended treasures from Italy turn out to be of little value. I know from good authority that the last remittance, alleged to be twenty millions, was only one million in cash, and three millions in plate and diamonds."

M. Barthelemy was a man of moderate political views, of great probity, and considerable literary acquirements. Sir John had corresponded with him from the year 1789, and had sent him recently some communications connected with agriculture, a branch of knowledge to which that eminent savant had paid much attention. Barthelemy, in his answer, took an

opportunity of expressing strongly his desire for peace. "I have received," he says, "with much satisfaction the note which the Chevalier Sinclair was pleased to write to me, under date of the 12th June, with the useful publication that came with it. I did not fail to make known both the one and the other to the Executive Directory. None desire more than myself to concur in the views expressed in the note of the Chevalier Sinclair, and to see the moment arrive when the two nations will know no other rivalry than such as will be dictated by their wishes to improve agriculture, and all the arts favourable to peace."

Sir John hastened to communicate the letter to Mr Pitt, conceiving that it would give him the greatest satisfaction. To his surprise, however, the Minister was of opinion that no private individual ought, under any circumstances, to have held communication with a member of the French Government; and expressed no pleasure at the pacific temper of the Director, the very individual who, on the part of France, had negotiated peace with Spain and Prussia.

It was with very different feelings that an aged and intelligent statesman, Mr Robinson, perused this interesting communication. "A thousand thanks," says he, "for your letter, and for the increased pleasure I received by your affording the perusal of M. Barthelemy's note. I have for many years, both in office and since out of office, held an opinion that

the two nations had really nothing to dispute about in these enlightened times ; and that we ought not to have any rivalry, but both equally study to improve our commerce and our country. These were my sentiments when M. Barthelemy was here, and I have never varied from them ; and I yet trust, old as I am, that I may live to see the day when those principles will be established, and pursued, to the discomfiture of ancient animosities, false prejudices, and ignorance. I have had the honour to sit in Parliament ever since the Accession Parliament, and am now 70 ; and I have often lamented the quarrels and disputes betwixt the two nations ; but received great satisfaction, indeed, in the accomplishment of the Commercial Treaty, which I hoped would still draw the two kingdoms nearer and nearer together."

Sir John now perceived that the British Government was disinclined to peace with France ; he suspected, also, that the war faction in France was powerful, and that the undecided state of the contest, by leaving each party every thing to hope, would render it difficult, if not impracticable, to adjust the terms of accommodation. Impressed with these views, he published a pamphlet, entitled "Thoughts on Peace ;" in which he endeavoured to point out powerful motives, arising from the peculiar circumstances of the times, which should induce both countries to deprecate a continuance of hostilities.

He begins by enumerating the various unworthy



causes inducing individuals to desire a prolongation of the war; self-interest, national ambition, and ill-directed patriotism. On the part of England it was maintained that no confidence could be put in the faith of the French nation; but "Is our war," he asks, "to be eternal? Shall we assume that France will grant no terms consistent with the safety of this country before we know what terms she actually will concede?" On the part of France it was alleged that having subdued all her continental enemies, she might expect to conquer England; but again he asks, "How is an island to be conquered which is defended by a superior fleet, and has an army more than capable of resisting any force that can be landed upon its shores?" He argues, that in France opinions had changed; that the Jacobinical principles which had so justly alarmed Europe were abandoned; that the reckless tyranny of Robespierre had been succeeded by regular government; and that the inviolability of property was now recognised as the basis of social order. On the other hand he argues, that France could not consider her new constitution established, her liberties consolidated, nor her conquests secured till the conclusion of a general peace; her career of victory might be arrested, or her general become a tyrant, employing his victorious armies as the instrument of usurpation. This appeal to prudence and common sense is followed up by an appeal to humanity on the horrors of a war unexampled in the magnitude

of its operations, and the number of its victims ; not victims only of the sword, but of cold, and famine, and disease, amidst the heart-rending miseries of a winter campaign among the marshes of Holland, or the mountain snows of Switzerland. He concludes with a pointed address to the French nation, as follows :—" A plain farmer like myself would be apt to say, subdue the earth with your ploughs, and do not destroy with the sword her miserable inhabitants. You have now an opportunity to exhibit the most interesting spectacle recorded in history. You must all recollect, with what enthusiastic admiration intelligence was received, that George Washington, a private citizen of America, elevated to the command of the armies of his country, and possessed of the confidence of his fellow-citizens, had resigned his power, and retired to a private station. Thence you may have some idea of the admiration with which, not only the present times, but posterity, will consider the magnanimity of the French people, if, after having waged so successful a war, they now agree to reasonable terms of peace, and restore the happiness of the universe."

We now approach the most critical emergency in the financial history of Great Britain—the suspension of cash-payments by the Bank of England. This great establishment had long been regarded as the impregnable fortress of public credit. The nation confided in its stability nearly in the same degree as

in the uniformity of nature. The mystery which hitherto had enveloped its proceedings magnified their importance ; while its immense resources, its close connexion with the Government, and its growing influence upon the commercial and monied interests for upwards of a century, had associated its prosperity in the imagination of the public, not with the wellbeing of any one district, of any one class, or of any one branch of industry, but with the prosperity and even existence of the state itself. A combination of disastrous circumstances, however, reduced the Bank at this time to the necessity of averting bankruptcy by obtaining the intervention of Parliament. During several years a constant draught for specie had been made upon the coffers of the establishment, caused simultaneously by a fall in the price of stocks, by the depression of commerce, and by the large remittances made in the precious metals to the Court of Vienna. In January 1795, the directors represented to the Chancellor of the Exchequer the necessity of making such financial arrangements as would obviate all necessity for assistance from them. Thrice, in the course of the same year, they repeated their remonstrances against his enormous advances to the imperial treasury. To the demands made by Government were added others not less formidable from country banks and private individuals. During the whole of the year 1796, apprehensions of invasion had caused a multitude of timid persons to convert their paper into

bullion, and to withdraw their deposits from the country banks. The latter had no resource against insolvency, but applications to the Bank of England. The panic which had originated in the provinces extended to the capital, and so alarming was the run upon the bank, that on the 20th February, the Directors, after resorting to the expedient of paying in sixpences, sent a deputation to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, soliciting his advice as to the extent to which their issues of coin should proceed. In this formidable crisis, the King came immediately from Windsor, and, for the first time during his reign, held a Council on Sunday. The result was an order in Council, suspending all payments in cash till the sense of Parliament could be taken as to the best means of restoring a metallic currency, and supporting public credit. On the Tuesday following, Mr Pitt gave notice of a motion for the appointment of a select committee to take into consideration the outstanding engagements of the bank. He declared, at the same time, his perfect conviction that its resources never were more abundant, although an act of Parliament would be necessary, enabling it for a time to pay in notes instead of cash. On the 28th, when the motion was brought forward, Mr Fox inveighed at large against all the measures of Administration, both financial and political, since the beginning of the war; drew a frightful picture of the miseries to which a profligate Government had reduced the nation; and concluded by de-

manding a full investigation of the causes which had brought the country into a state, whatever it might be termed, of real bankruptcy. He was supported by Mr (afterwards Sir Benjamin) Hobhouse, and by Mr Martin, after whom Sir John Sinclair rose to deliver the opinion of himself and other independent members with whom he acted. \*

He insisted that the same steps should now be taken as in 1696, when the Bank was labouring under similar embarrassments; that enquiry should be made, not only into the *outstanding engagements*, but into the *whole property* of the Bank; and that this enquiry should be carried on, not by the supporters or the opponents of the Administration, but by independent men, in whose impartiality as well as judgment the public might place confidence.

He stated that the mischief had not come upon him by surprise; that he had long foreseen it; that in September 1795, he had forewarned the Directors of their danger, and had suggested to them the expediency of issuing notes for various sums, down to two pounds, not immediately convertible into specie—a measure by which the evil might have been effectually averted.

He was of opinion that the Chancellor of the Exchequer underrated the extent of the change, rendered necessary by the present crisis, in the monetary arrangements of the country. The Right Honourable gentleman intended that the notes of the Bank

should be a legal tender from *individuals* to the *public*. “But,” says Sir John, “the question next arises, are bank-notes to be considered a legal tender from the *public* to *individuals*? If not, public affairs can no longer be carried on; for there is not specie enough in the country to pay all the public creditors. A further question is, are bank-notes to be a legal tender from *individual* to *individual*? If not, I am persuaded that one-half the public may be sent to jail for debt, and that the other half will become bankrupts.”

Mr Fox’s sentiments were embodied by Mr Sheridan, in an amendment on Mr Pitt’s motion, proposing the insertion of the words, “and also to enquire into the causes which have produced the order in Council of the 26th instant.” The amendment was rejected by a majority of 244 against 86.

The report of the committee on the affairs of the bank stated that the surplus capital, after a deduction of the debts, amounted to L.3,382,689, inclusive of a permanent loan to Government, amounting to L.11,666,800 in 3 per cent stock. On this report was grounded an act of Parliament, confirming the order in Council, and comprehending the important clause that no person should be subject to arrest who offered Bank of England notes in discharge of a debt. A bill was also introduced, to legalize the issue of small notes by private bankers, but without those securities and limitations which my father, as we have seen, so earnestly recommended. From this period

the circulation of gold coin nearly ceased throughout the British empire. A paper currency in small notes became the general medium of circulation. This currency was, from year to year, indefinitely increased. It consequently sunk in value, and the monied price of all commodities proportionably rose. The historian of the revenue always attributed the perilous circumstances of the country at this crisis to the profusion and impolicy of the Government, but at the same time considered the measure actually adopted to be unavoidable. At first he was anxious that some plan should be devised for re-opening the Bank. He was summoned to various meetings of merchants, bankers, and financiers, upon the question. He even wrote a tract, containing some suggestions which he supposed might be effectual in restoring public credit, independent of a restriction act. Experience led him afterwards to view the subject in a different light. He regarded the restriction act as a measure dictated by sound policy, and, throughout his whole remaining life, insisted that a discovery in finance was thus forced upon us, from which all our subsequent prosperity arose. "It was a great discovery," he often said, "when a metallic medium of exchange was substituted for barter; it was also a great discovery when paper, convertible into coin, was substituted for gold and silver; but a third discovery was reserved for the present times, namely, that with an inconvertible paper currency, agriculture, commerce, and manufac-

tures might advance in a career of unexampled prosperity." It was the Bank Restriction Act, he affirmed, which enabled Great Britain to resist a confederacy of all Europe against her—to maintain armaments upon a scale of magnitude unknown to the greatest empires, ancient or modern—and to subdue the ablest and most successful conqueror who had ever violated the integrity of nations, or sported with the liberties of mankind.

The objection was often made, that all these symptoms of prosperity were a mere fancy and delusion, and that the ultimate effects of the paper system were, of necessity, as disastrous as its immediate consequences were magnificent and beneficial. But Sir John always contended that the terms fanciful and delusive, were utterly absurd as applied to a prosperity which not only produced millions of acres of additional cultivation, but multiplied factories of all kinds throughout the kingdom—crowded new docks and harbours with shipping—intersected the whole country with canals and roads—and brought new comforts to the cottage, while it multiplied the luxuries of the castle and the palace. He was also prepared to prove, that the calamities generally attributed to the paper system, arose from no cause inherent in the system itself, but from the mismanagement of politicians, both while it continued in operation, and at the period of its abandonment.

I have several times had occasion to observe that



my father's chief political connexion for many years was with Lord Moira and a party known at that time by the name of the "Armed Neutrality." Their great objects were to procure peace; or if peace were unattainable, to carry on the war with prudence and economy, and also to effect some reform in the representation of the people. They viewed the state and prospects of the nation through the gloomiest medium. They had no confidence in the Minister, whom they considered not only acquainted imperfectly with foreign politics, but injudicious in his conduct of affairs at home, inaccessible to advice, and arrogant from the continued flattery of obsequious majorities; who, looking up to him as a kind of oracle, and identifying his administration with the British constitution, branded all who questioned his infallibility as enemies of their country. The following letters from Lord Moira exhibit very strikingly the fear, the irritation, and the despondency of this neutral section.

" Montalto, Ballynahinch,  
October 6, 1796.

" My dear Sir John,

" You may perhaps think me indolent or indifferent for not attending at the opening of Parliament. Not so. But as nothing will now prevent the evil hour which has long been preparing for the country, wherefore should one give one's self the trouble of making an observation? I do not the less feel for

the degradation of the British empire. Believe that I have the honour to be very faithfully yours,

“MOIRA.”

In the following year his Lordship's sentiments are expressed in still more dismal terms :

“Donington, April 6.

“My dear Sir John,

“It will be impossible for me to be in town before Monday next. On that day I shall arrive, though I tell you truly that I see such wretched apathy in the higher ranks as makes me think it little worth while to struggle for the prevention of that convulsion which is rapidly approaching.

“Faithfully yours,

“M.”

“Donington, April 24, 1797.

“My dear Sir John,

“When you blame me for being absent, you certainly must imagine that I was not serious in the opinion I gave you respecting the state of affairs. It is very doubtful, in my judgment, whether any management can save this country from the convulsion which is rapidly approaching. But if any measures can be successful, it can be only such as shall arise from the clear conviction of Parliament as to the extent of the danger, and the necessity of timely

prevention. This conviction is not to be infused by speeches which the individual will always regard as arising from a principle of opposition. It must be the result of the view which every man takes of the position of his own interest and security; and, I apprehend, few who now hold advantageous situations in the community will like the prospect. As no administration can settle our affairs without a general and public-spirited exertion on the part of the country, it would be madness in any man to wish to take charge of the helm, unless he were assured of such a concurrence; and no man can be assured of it without he be called into office by the deliberate act of his Majesty, and the independent members of Parliament. To get into office by combination or intrigue, or by improving an accidental opening for striking at the Minister, would be more than childishness. I am, therefore, as well here as I could be in London. If the storm must burst upon us, which it will do, if this wretched and polluted administration shall remain, we shall see who bears rough weather best. Faithfully yours,

“MOIRA.”

My father afterwards wrote again to Lord Moira, urging him to lay the state of the country before his Majesty at a private audience; and naming many independent members of Parliament, who concurred in wishing him to take this important and decisive

step. His Lordship, from his answer, appears to have despaired of making any impression on the mind of the King.

“ Donington, May 5, 1797.

“ My dear Sir John,

“ If the earnest prayer of the country, now so distinctly pronounced that the King cannot be doubtful as to the sense of the nation, has not sufficient efficacy to make his Majesty open his eyes to the crisis in which we stand, how is the representation of myself or any other individual to impress him with the danger? I would long ago have solicited an audience for the purpose, were it not for the certain misconception in his mind which I saw would attend the step; a misconception whose tendency would be to confirm him in the ruinous delusion from which we wish to extricate him. Prepossessed with the idea that the public difficulties are only such as any little commonplace dexterity may remove, he would not comprehend that an official situation could be undesirable to any man; and he would thence imagine that the statement of impending evils was only made with the interested hope of supplanting his present Ministers. No; the business must work itself out. I doubt whether it be not already too late to do any good: but at all events, it is impossible to prevent the storm, if the King do not of himself become thoroughly sensible of the nature of the exigency.

Pardon me, therefore, if I do not set out for London earlier than I had before settled, which is on Sunday next.

“ Believe, my dear Sir John, that I have the honour to be very faithfully yours,

“ MOIRA.”

It appears from the papers I have consulted, that some powerful individuals, whose personal and hereditary attachments would have led them to support the Administration, began at this time to waver, and even to adopt the same views with the noble Earl and honourable Baronet just mentioned. I may instance the Duke of Northumberland as a leading example. Even in the preceding year his Grace wrote to my father, condemning in very plain terms the measures of Mr Pitt.

“ Alnwick Castle, Oct. 28, 1796.

“ Dear Sir,

“ As you inform me that the Minister proposes to tax about one-fourth, or one-half of all the property of the kingdom, I am not surprised that by his new military requisition he intends raising one-fourth or one-half of all the men in Great Britain capable of bearing arms. This last measure appears to be a very necessary consequence of the former.

“ I am quite surprised to find by your letter that you have been jockeyed out of your seat. I really

had always understood till I received yours, that you were in the present Parliament. I fear the plan you mention will not be possible. I have already had too much trouble with Launceston to venture to risk meeting another vacancy. Many thanks for Lord Moira's, which I return you. The account is very curious. Adieu, my dear Sir John ; accept the Duchess's best compliments, together with my own, and be kind enough to offer the same in our names to Lady Sinclair. I have the pleasure to be, yours most sincerely,

“ NORTHUMBERLAND.

“ P. S.—Who could have thought at the commencement of this war that Mr Pitt would at the end of it have adopted two of the most violent of the French measures ; viz. a forced loan, and a military requisition ?”

His Grace is, if possible, still more decisive in a letter of the following year :—

“ Bath, June 19, 1797.

“ Dear Sir,

“ I am very sorry to find by your letter, which I received by the last post, that our hopes of peace have vanished ; for it is my firm opinion, that without one, we must soon be undone. It will, however, be attended with some advantage to this country, if, as you imagine, it should really lead to the dismissal of those Ministers whose obstinacy and incapacity

have been the means of bringing us to the brink of ruin. With these sentiments, I cannot help feeling singularly unhappy that my present state of health should be such as to prevent the possibility of my leaving this place at present, and co-operating by my attendance in Parliament in bringing about so desirable and absolutely necessary an event. I have the pleasure to be, with great regard, dear sir, your faithful friend,

“NORTHUMBERLAND.”

This year, by a strange turn of events, Sir John Sinclair and another individual stood alone, on a remarkable occasion, in opposition to the Minister. Lord Malmesbury had been twice sent to treat for peace with the French Directory; but had been unsuccessful in both embassies. In the latter especially, he received such marks of haughtiness and insult, as had excited general indignation at home. When the papers connected with the negotiation were laid before the House of Commons, the Opposition Benches were left vacant by Mr Fox and his friends, who declared, that “finding all their counsels rejected, and their resistance ineffectual, they had resolved to withdraw from the House, leaving their antagonists to pursue their own system of policy without control. They alleged that they were weary of attending merely to be outvoted and re-

proached by Ministerial hirelings as enemies of their country."

My father, as I have mentioned, had received assurances from various correspondents abroad that the French nation were weary of the war; that the conduct of the Directory was generally condemned; and that any further manifestation of a desire for peace on the part of this country would coincide so entirely with popular opinion that the Directory must either yield or hazard a counter-revolution. Sir John communicated accordingly with the Premier, and received from him a reply interesting from its connexion with the debate that followed.

" Downing Street, Nov. 6, 1797.

" Sir,

" I have read the paper which you have taken the trouble of sending me, containing your idea of an address on the issue of the late negotiation. Agreeable to your desire, I return it enclosed, as the terms in which it is drawn, certainly do not appear to me to express adequately the sentiments which I think must be generally felt, within doors and without, at the present crisis. I am, sir, your obedient humble servant,

" W. PITT."

My father had collected materials for a long address



in support of an amendment favourable to peace, but urgent private business obliged him to come forward comparatively unprepared. He objected both to the want of dignity, with which the negotiations had been carried on, and to the insulting language employed after they been broken off. Our ambassador had made proposals without insisting upon counter-proposals from the negotiators of France; and the royal declaration published afterwards was full of rash and violent invective, calculated to perpetuate animosity between the two countries. He insisted that if the French were inveterate against Britain, it was because Britain was inveterate against them; that if they wished to overturn our constitution, it was because we had evinced a desire to overturn theirs; and that the French people would be glad to be at amity and peace with us, if we would only give them clearly to understand that we did not cherish against them an implacable hostility. He moved, therefore, for such a change in the terms of the address as would evince clearly our desire to renew the negotiation upon terms honourable to both countries. Mr Bryan Edwards seconded the amendment. Mr Pitt combated these objections in perhaps the most brilliant speech he ever delivered in the House; one, I believe, of the two which he corrected with his own hand for publication. So powerful was the effect of this oration, that the friends of peace were utterly routed, and left their leader and his seconder to sustain the contest

alone. One member after another rose to entreat that the honourable Baronet would not disturb the unanimity of the House by pressing his amendment. Even Mr Wilberforce, who once before had pleaded eloquently for peace, now joined the advocates of war. Sir John, therefore, yielded, declaring that he was ready to sacrifice not only his proposition, but whatever was most dear to him, to the welfare of his country.

The following account of this debate is given in a contemporary French newspaper, *Tablettes Republiques*, No. 14. 20th Nov. 1797:—

“ Sir John Sinclair dit qu’il voyait avec peine que le langage de l’adresse, comme celui de la déclaration publiée, était inconsideré, inapplicable à la position des deux contrées, peu propre à produire de bons effets, en ce que non seulement on y professait la nécessité d’une guerre sans fin, mais on se fondait encore sur des reproches que les papiers mis sous les yeux de la chambre ne justifiaient pas.

“ Si la France, dit-il, paraît avoir une animosité invétérée contre nous, c’est parce qu’elle pense que tels sont nos sentimens a son égard. Il demanda par amendement que les passages qui énonçaient ces dispositions hostiles, invétérées, fussent supprimés, et qu’on déclarât que, lorsque la France serait disposée à traiter en des termes raisonnables, on ne se refuserait pas aux négociations,

“ M. Pitt fit un discours très-étendu pour appuyer l'adresse. L'amendement fut rejeté.”

He soon found reason to regret that his amendment had been so ill received. A few days afterwards, meeting Mr Goldsmidt of the Stock Exchange, who had just returned from Paris, he was assured by him that the debate had been of more importance than those concerned in it supposed. “ Your motion on the Address,” he said, “ made a greater noise in France than you had any conception of; and I was assured by one of the directors, that if it had been carried, they were determined to resign. Such is the anxiety of the French people for peace, that they would have agreed to any reasonable terms, and nothing prevented a general cry to that effect, but the idea that the English people were inexorable, and had determined to carry on the war in spite of all concessions.”

On the question of peace with France, Sir John received the following characteristic letter from Lord Thurlow :—

“ 27th January, 1798.

“ Dear Sir,

“ Your letter turns upon points which cannot easily or conveniently be discussed in this way of conferring. That the war was needless and unjust in the commencement, absurd and iniquitous in much of its conduct, the perpetual shifting of their ground

by its advocates affords abundant proof. That a war, so manifestly against the apparent interests of both countries, might, at many different epochs, have been concluded, admits of no doubt; nay, perhaps even now the avenue to peace is by no means shut. The behaviour of the French negotiators at Lisle was so awkward and gross, I can put no interpretation upon it. But even that uncertainty would naturally lead to change the mode of treatment, and to feel individual pulses. The parade of a congress is ridiculous, without some previous understanding between the parties; and the means of creating that which others have tried successfully, should not be neglected on our part. The fee-simple of all the ostensible terms in question are not worth the bribe which would buy them off. When you return to town, if I can be of any use to your endeavours to bring forward any thing useful, I shall be happy to discuss it with you."

As my father, during many years, had occasional intercourse with Lord Thurlow, one or two reminiscences of that extraordinary character may be here appropriately introduced. When Mr Pitt obtained permission from the King to deprive Lord Thurlow of the seals, the only Minister who could be prevailed on to undertake the formidable task of demanding them in person was Mr Dundas. The Secretary had recourse to the following expedient:—He sent a note to the Chancellor the night before, informing him that he proposed to have the honour of break-

fasting with his Lordship next day, having *very particular business to settle with him*. On his arrival, Lord Thurlow said to him, "I know the business you are come about; you shall have the bag and seals: there they are," he added, "pointing to a side-table, and here is your breakfast." They sat down sociably to their coffee, and Dundas declared, that he never saw the ex-Chancellor in better humour.

A Welsh curate, hearing that a chancellor's living had become vacant, hastened to London with a shrewdly devised plan for securing the nomination. He waited on Bishop Porteous, to whom he had an introduction, and requested his influence with Lord Thurlow. "You are not aware," answers the Bishop, "that Lord Thurlow and I are on bad terms, and that a word from me will do you harm."—"But will your Lordship allow me," says the curate, "to make use of your name, if I think that it will do me good?" Having obtained the Bishop's permission, his next step was to procure an interview with the Chancellor. When he stated his object, Lord Thurlow received him most ungraciously. "Who," he asked, "encouraged you to make this application?"

"The Bishop of London," stammered out the Curate, "told me that I might use his name; and"——

"And what right has the Bishop of London to interfere with my patronage? *You shall not have the living!*"

"Ah!" says the Welshman, in a tone of despon-

dency, "The Bishop told me that if I used his name it would do me no good."

"Did he?" says the Chancellor. "*Then you shall have the living.*" And he immediately made out the nomination.

The aspect of public affairs in 1798 continued to become more gloomy, from the increasing strength of our enemies abroad, and the increasing violence of parties at home. Sir John Sinclair became more anxious than ever that, if possible, an Administration should be formed, including moderate and practical men from both sides. On this occasion he wrote a pamphlet, in the form of a letter to Lord Thurlow, whom he selected from respect for his wisdom and integrity. He enforces the necessity of public union at home by the example of the Swiss, who in the preceding year had resolved to adjourn all domestic quarrels, and give their whole attention to the common interests of the Helvetic body, then threatened with invasion by France. He remarks that, in the speeches from the throne, his Majesty had repeatedly called for unanimity among his subjects; while his Ministers kept up a system of irritation by abusing, ridiculing, and insulting their opponents. "It is an advantage," he says, "peculiar to the British Constitution, that, besides an hereditary and a popular assembly invested with a large proportion of legislative authority, where a spirit of party must in general prevail, and where, on common occasions, it may have beneficial effects,

there is a Monarch established upon the throne, possessed of distinct powers and privileges, who has the appointment of magistrates before, whom all parties must be equal, and who must consider himself as the common parent of all his subjects. Placed in so proud and elevated a situation, what better use can a Sovereign make of his influence, authority, and power, than in critical emergencies to unite all his people, and to heal their mutual animosities? With what dignity, and almost godlike beneficence, would not the ruler of a free people appear on such an occasion; and, if successful, which I think can hardly be questioned, how little need he dread the threats and efforts of his enemies, however formidable?" The Baronet then expresses his fears that the kind of proscription under which an Opposition, powerful from its talents, as well as weight and influence in the country, were placed, might tempt them to realize those unconstitutional schemes which their adversaries imputed to them. He anticipates two objections to the proposed union of parties—that it was *needless* and that it was *impracticable*; *needless*, because the existing Ministry possessed sufficient energy and talent to save the country; *impracticable*, because the violence of both parties excluded all hope either of reconciliation or coalescence.

In reply to these objections, having pointed out the inefficiency of Ministers, and the responsibility they would incur if additional disasters befel the kingdom,

he describes the independent position of the Throne as the last resource of a divided nation, adding, that the King should look around among all parties for persons of real patriotism, and, by effecting an union among them, form an administration entitled to the confidence of the country. "The public," he says, "can hardly be satisfied that a union of parties is impracticable, unless a further attempt for that purpose be made under the auspices of the Sovereign; and (to give it the better chance of success) enforced by the declared wishes of both Houses. If any one, after this, should venture to set up his personal pretensions, or those of his friends, in opposition to the public interests, he would necessarily and deservedly be treated with universal odium, detestation, and contempt."

This pamphlet was published in February, with the name of the author, who soon afterwards put forth, anonymously, another tract, entitled, "Hints on the Present Alarming Crisis." In this second effort, he states still more distinctly his alarm for the public safety, and the means which he considered necessary for averting national ruin. In the exordium, he describes the kingdom "loaded with an enormous debt, burdened with increasing taxes, scarcely longer to be patiently supported—our public credit reduced to a state of degradation which the country had never before witnessed—the Bank of England suspending its payments in cash, and brought to the verge, if not



plunged into the gulf of bankruptcy—our navy, the natural bulwark of the kingdom, in a state of mutiny and disorder—and the armies of France dictating the terms of peace to our almost only remaining ally, the German Emperor, within a few miles of his capital.”

The question then suggested itself, whether the conduct of affairs should be continued in the hands of the existing Ministry, surrendered to their opponents, or intrusted to a third or intermediate party, who might be “prevailed upon to accept of office under circumstances so critical.”

He then dwells at great length on the incompetency of Ministers—their want of energy or want of foresight, to which the public disasters must be attributed—their needless provocation of our enemies, which rendered them incapable of negotiating a peace—and their treachery and arrogance towards our allies, which unfitted them for carrying on the war. With respect to the Opposition, he remarks, that their oratorical talents were undoubted—but that if mere oratory were the sure test of ability and merit, there would be no occasion for a change in the Administration, since the Ministers had rhetoric at their command as well as their antagonists. He adverts to the eulogies pronounced by the Opposition on the French Republic; their personal abuse of all the great potentates of Europe; their unpopularity not only with the King and the nobility, but even with the people; their doubtful attachment to the consti-

tution and the character of their leader, self-sufficient, overbearing, and impracticable. In the third party he admits that there are no orators, but insists, that as flourishes of declamation were not essential to the good government of the country, the Sovereign might overlook the want of a ready or glittering elocution in the choice of his counsellors.

As, however, such an Administration, by incurring the hostility of both parties, would be placed between two fires, he proceeds to remove the erroneous idea which prevailed out of doors as to the overwhelming influence of oratory in the House. "It seldom makes," says he, "the difference of three votes at the end of a debate." The independent Cabinet in question would be formed for the purpose of retrieving the effects of misgovernment—would be supported by the consciousness of their own integrity, by the favour of their Sovereign, and the confidence of their fellow-countrymen—and would therefore be invulnerable to the fiercest invectives of spleen and disappointment, although discharged with all the skill of the most accomplished rhetoricians. "Conducted by such men," he concludes, "we can hardly fail to stand our ground. The strength of the country is great ; its spirit, were it properly roused, is high ; its resources, foreign and domestic, if properly managed, sufficient to avert any disaster affecting our essential interests, far less our existence as a great, a powerful, and an independent nation."

During the greater part of the sessions 1797-8-9, Sir John Sinclair appears to have taken a leading part in the business of the House of Commons, especially during the period when the Opposition benches were vacant. In one of his speeches he assigns this reason for the peculiar position which he assumed in opposing the financial measures of the Ministers:—  
“As so many members of the House who were formerly accustomed to take an active and distinguished part in our deliberations, have been induced to absent themselves, it is the more necessary that those who continue to attend should strenuously do their duty, stating from time to time their sentiments on the various important questions which come before us. It can hardly be expected, indeed, that the nation will be satisfied with the conduct of its representatives, unless it finds that besides those who are bound to attend, from their official duties, there are other members who will take the trouble of examining the bills brought before the House—discuss their merits or demerits—suggest corrections when necessary—and, in short, endeavour, to the best of their ability and judgment, to protect and promote the general interests of the country.”

The chief peculiarity in Mr Pitt's plans, was his departure, in 1797, from the old financial arrangement called the funding system. Instead of borrowing the whole sum wanted for the extraordinary expenses of the year, and levying new taxes to pay the interest,

he now proposed to provide for the annual expenses, partly by a loan, and partly by taxation ; thus making the revenue of the country as much as possible commensurate with its expenditure. This new method was more burdensome and oppressive at the time, but he conceived that the funding system could not be carried further without endangering the national credit. While he hoped for a speedy termination of the war by coalitions among foreign powers, he conceived that the expenses incurred in supporting the majesty and integrity of the empire might be paid during the period of national repose, which he speedily anticipated. But now that our allies had been successively subdued or forced to accept degrading terms of peace—and now that the war promised to be more protracted, though less expensive, he judged that the time was come when we were called upon to spare posterity, and to take the burden, in part at least, upon ourselves.

Mr Pitt's first resource was to increase the assessed taxes threefold ; a measure which, he calculated, would produce about eight millions. Next year (1798) he proposed, for the same purpose, a redemption of the land tax ; an impost yielding at that time a revenue of L.2,000,000. This fund he designed to sell at twenty years' purchase, so as to produce the sum of L.40,000,000, or L.80,000,000 in three per cent consols, which were then at 50. As this sum in stock would yield an interest of L.2,400,000, the an-

nual gain to the public would be L.400,000. This measure was strenuously resisted by the independent members, who still continued to attend the House. Sir John Sinclair, in particular, opposed it in a speech of great length, and stated various objections, legal, constitutional, and financial, insisting, that to make the land tax perpetual would render Ministers independent of Parliament—would encourage a profuse expenditure of public money—would cause endless confusion and litigation among owners of landed property—would give the monied interest an unfair advantage over the agricultural ; and, finally, would be feeble and inoperative, since purchasers of the tax, under the disastrous circumstances of the country, could not easily be found. These anticipations as to the inefficiency of the measure were, in a great degree, realized ; for after three years not more than one-fourth of the tax was redeemed.

The other financial measure of Mr Pitt, that of trebling the assessed taxes, proved inefficient also, as the produce fell short of his estimate by nearly one-half, and amounted only to L.4,500,000. Under these circumstances, he proposed that instead of the *expenditure* the *income* of the individual should determine the amount of his contributions to the public service. The Premier estimated the whole income of the inhabitants of Great Britain, from all sources, at L.100,000,000 ; and reckoned, therefore, that a tax of ten per cent would produce a revenue of ten

millions. Among the most remarkable peculiarities in his speech, was the difficulty he appeared to find in calculating the amount of land in cultivation, and the rent derived from it. His data were drawn from the works of Sir William Petty, from Davenant and King, two writers in the reign of Queen Anne; from Dr Adam Smith, from Sir John Sinclair, from Arthur Young, and from a report drawn up for the Board of Agriculture by Mr Middleton. It was a source of great triumph to Arthur Young, that the same Minister, who had looked so coldly on the Board of Agriculture, found, in the result of its labours, the chief data for his most important financial measure.\*

On the 14th December, Sir John, in the committee of ways and means, stated at great length, and with much vigour and precision, his objections to the measure;† declaring that he considered it impossible by amendments to make the proposition fit to be adopted by the House. He was opposed not merely to the details, but to the principle of the scheme. He deprecated any departure from the funding system, “a mode of raising money which,” says he, “some gentlemen are inclined to reprobate, because they only contemplate its defects, but which I have ever considered as the climax of financial invention—the greatest of all political discoveries—the most valuable

\* See Lecture to the Board.

† See Cobbett's Parliamentary History, vol. 34, p. 73, where the speech occupies 14 closely-printed columns.

mine that ever any nation was possessed of; and, in a peculiar manner, the source of the strength, the prosperity, and the happiness of this country." He argued that if this admirable system were abandoned at all, the abandonment should be complete, and the whole supply raised within the year. He reprobated the middle course proposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer as a miserable expedient, the result of irresolution and incapacity, under which the country would enjoy neither the advantages of the one system nor of the other; but would labour under the inconveniences of both. The circulating medium would be wanted, at the same time, in the capital for the payment of the loan, and throughout the country for the payment of the extraordinary contributions. He denied that the new system had re-established public credit. The funds, no doubt, had risen six per cent since the last loan; but they had at that time been down at 48, a price more than five per cent lower than they had ever borne during the war with America. "And can no other cause," he sarcastically asked, "be assigned for that rise but the measure now under contemplation? Is nothing, for instance, to be attributed to the land-tax redemption bill, which, I am informed, has partially succeeded in various districts, and the beneficial consequences of which we hear so much of on other occasions?—nothing to the astonishing increase of commercial wealth, and the improvement of our agricultural resources?—

and nothing to our naval victories, to which, indeed, more than to the financial measures of the Right Honourable Gentleman, our present prosperous situation ought to be ascribed? In short, four causes are assigned for this rise of six per cent, according as it best suits the convenience of the Minister. Let us give each of them a fair proportion, namely, one and a half per cent; let us suppose that we have occasion for L.25,000,000 this year, and that we borrow the whole, instead of raising a part, on the new principle, within the year; the difference, at the rate of one and a half per cent, is but L.375,000, and for that paltry and miserable sum the whole nation is to be subjected to the grievous oppression of this intolerable measure."

But admitting the *principle* of the measure to be sound, and that the funding system should be in part abandoned, he next insisted on the *injustice* of the scheme—a scheme which made no distinction between the capitalist and annuitant; and proceeded to give various reasons, why the fairest plan would be to lay one half per cent on capital, and five per cent on income. He pointedly animadverted on the selection made by the Minister of authorities respecting the resources of the nation. "When I heard," says he, "the Right Honourable Gentleman expressing himself with so much doubt respecting various particulars, and resting on the antiquated notions of Davenant and King, and the guesses of modern authorities, I could



not help wishing that the Right Honourable Gentleman had given most assistance to an institution I had the honour of suggesting—I mean the Board of Agriculture—by which all these points, had it been properly supported, would have been, ere now, fully ascertained. It is my deliberate and solemn opinion, that no country can be well governed, unless its real situation be thoroughly known. *Ad consilium de republica dandum, caput est nōsse rempublicam.* Indeed, had not the progress of that institution been checked by those who were regardless of the interests of the country they governed, provided they could gratify their own personal spleen and resentment, we should now have been debating, not on loose calculations, and uncertain data, but on a general report upon the state of the country, founded on authentic information, which it would have been in my power before this time to lay upon the table of this House.”

He then went on to state specific objections to a tax on income, grounded on its probable inefficiency ; its inquisitorial character ; its necessary interference with the productiveness of other taxes ; its tendency to raise the price of the necessaries of life ; its injustice towards the fundholder ; as well as towards persons resident in Great Britain, but whose property lay in Ireland or the colonies ; and who would thus be under the hard necessity of contributing to the English treasury out of property not protected by English laws ; lastly, he insisted on the encourage-

ment which this odious tax would give to profuse expenditure and interminable hostilities. "Ten millions of additional revenue," says he, "will be considered as a fund for borrowing, and, at five per cent, would pay the interest of two hundred millions of money." As the surest plan for extricating the country from its financial difficulties, he suggested the appointment of a select committee to enquire into the subject; insisting that economy and retrenchment were better than increased taxation; and that it was more necessary to bring down the expenditure, than to raise the revenue of the kingdom. He warned the House not to be led away by those philippics against the French Directory, with which the Minister and his friends were accustomed to interlard their orations; and by which they inflamed the passions, while they perplexed the understandings of a partial auditory. Having shown the irrelevance and injuriousness of these anti-Gallican harangues, he concludes, "I have thus, sir, stated at some length, but not longer than the importance of the question demands, my sentiments regarding it; and I earnestly intreat that the members of this House, divesting themselves of partiality for one individual, and of prejudice against others, will consider the subject itself dispassionately as one on which depends the future happiness of this country. Let them resolve, instead of taking a measure of this moment blindly upon trust, because it happens to be introduced by a favourite Minister—

let them resolve, on the present occasion, to see with their own eyes, to hear with their own ears, and to be directed by their own judgment. Let them be assured, if they suffer this bill to pass, that it will be an event which they themselves will severely repent of, when it will unfortunately be too late ; and which their posterity will have just cause to lament, as one of the greatest calamities that could possibly have befallen that country they were doomed to inherit. Let them also be assured, if such a bill as this meets with their approbation, that the British House of Commons will no longer be considered as that independent senate, whose conduct has formerly been looked up to with admiration and respect, both in this country and on the continent of Europe—but will be accounted a degraded chamber of commerce and finance—calculated solely for the purpose of registering the edicts of a Minister, without knowledge of their contents, or conviction of their utility.”

The exertions of the financial Baronet were utterly unavailing. The Income Tax was carried by a majority of 183 to 17. In the absence of the regular Opposition, this little phalanx of 17 was all that could be mustered against the legion of the Minister. The effect produced by my father's speech was greater out of doors than in the House. He began to be considered on both sides as the chief advocate of economy. Persons aware of any abuse in the expenditure of public money communicated to him a large

variety of curious particulars. The strange documents before me, even from such remote quarters as the isle of Man, illustrate the facility with which a popular economist may at any time surprise the world by the extent and minuteness of his information. A clever caricature by Gilray is still extant, in which Sir John is represented under the title of the "State Watchman, or Political Economist," with a lantern in his hand "to discover robbers;" a staff "to protect the country;" a rattle "to sound an alarm;" a bunch of papers "to improve your agriculture;" and with a speech issuing from his mouth, "Shall we be satisfied with cold economy? No! let there be a vigorous system of retrenchment in all the departments of the state."

Although my father so decidedly opposed the income tax, he felt a patriotic anxiety, that while it became productive to the Exchequer it should press as lightly as possible on individuals. With this view, he printed a small quarto pamphlet, entitled, "Thoughts on Circulation and Paper Currency." His object was to show that every increase in the amount of commodities to be circulated, or of taxes to be raised in the kingdom, should be followed by a proportionate increase in the circulating medium: that as a greater amount of the precious metals could not be procured, paper money must be made to supply their place; that the issue of this paper should not be trusted in the hands of Government, who would

be tempted to augment it beyond all bounds, as had been done in France and in America ; neither should it be trusted to private banks which gave no security ; but that for this especial purpose, corporations should be established by charter, whose loans to the public might be a guarantee for their stability.

In the month of April, 1800, when the consolidation of the British Empire was about to be completed by the union with Ireland, Sir John Sinclair was of opinion that a favourable opportunity had arrived, of bringing forward, with advantage, the claims of Scotland to a larger share in the representation than she had hitherto enjoyed. In a letter to Mr Secretary Dundas on this subject, he contended that, by the proposed terms of Union, Ireland, as compared with Scotland, would have the privilege of sending a greater number of representatives than that island was entitled to, whether on the ground of population, property, revenue, or territorial extent. He remarked on the anomaly, that the proportion of Irish representatives in the Lower House was intended to be larger than the proportion in the Upper. There would be in the House of Lords only thirty-two Irish peers, or exactly double the number of representatives of the Scottish Peerage ; whereas, in the House of Commons, there would be no less than a hundred Irish members, although double the number of the Scottish members would be only ninety. He pleaded, therefore, upon principles of equity and justice, for a grant of five

additional representatives to Scotland, declaring, in conclusion, that although he had of late differed much from his friend, Mr Dundas, on many important political questions, yet he would cordially unite with him in urging, at so favourable a juncture, the claims of their common country.

The Union with Ireland was the last important measure of Mr Pitt's Administration. Early in the year 1801 he resigned office, and was succeeded on the 7th of March by Mr Addington, Speaker of the House of Commons. Historians have been much perplexed in accounting for the retirement of that great minister, at a period when he had accomplished one of the most arduous achievements in the annals of statesmanship, and when his power seemed impregnable to all attacks. In the year following, my father sent a paper containing the secret history of this transaction to Mr Tyrwhitt, private Secretary to the Prince of Wales, for the information of his Royal Highness, and was assured, by the following letter, that the Prince had adopted the same solution of the mystery.

“ Dear Sir John,

“ I had an opportunity yesterday morning to read to the Prince the paper you were so good as to send me, and his Royal Highness seemed perfectly to agree with you.

“ It strikes me to be very correct; but you must manage, in revising it, to show that so cunning was

P., the arch-dealer in fraud by wholesale (as Thurlow says), that though Lord Spencer and Windham went out of office against their wills, they fully believed the Catholic question to be the only cause of all the fuss ; but I strongly suspect P. and Dundas had other reasons for being off, more personal to themselves, and that the only person intrusted with their confidence was Lord Grenville. But to a better and more useful subject. When you have reflected upon Baron Lilien's queries, send me answers to them. He is a very deserving and truly patriotic Hungarian, and I am persuaded will be happy to abide by your answers.

“ Very faithfully yours,

“ THOMAS TYRWHITT.

“ Welbeck Street, 14th Feb. 1802.”

The document above referred to, is, I believe, the same which my father has published in his “ Correspondence.” The substance of it is as follows :—Mr Pitt found so much difficulty in prevailing upon the Irish Parliament to pass an act of Union, that besides employing corruption on a scale beyond example, he was obliged to make large concessions. He raised the number of representatives for Ireland in the Commons from sixty (the number originally intended), to 100, and held out hopes of emancipation to the Romanists. He accordingly insisted upon introducing a recommendation to that effect into the King's first

speech to the Imperial Parliament. To this, however, the King would not consent; and when Mr Secretary Dundas endeavoured to overcome his scruples, his Majesty replied, "that he wanted none of his Scotch sophistry," and that it was "better for him to change his Ministers than his religion." Mr Pitt and his friends conceived that the King would not be able to form a Cabinet without either themselves or the Opposition, who were also pledged to concede emancipation. But George III. was prepared for this dilemma. Having formed a high opinion of the Speaker, Mr Addington, he sent for him to Buckingham House, and surprised him with an offer to make him Premier. Addington might have declared, like Malvolio, that "some have greatness thrust upon them;" for he accepted, with great reluctance, the King's offer; and only on condition that Mr Pitt consented to the appointment. The latter did consent, though with more reluctance than even Addington himself; and consented, only because he preferred that lukewarm friends rather than inveterate enemies should be enabled to scrutinize the transactions of his administration.

My father's chief friend in the new Ministry was the Right Honourable Charles Yorke, Secretary at War, with whom he held frequent communications on military and financial subjects. Sir John's mode of introducing his first suggestion is characteristic. He relates an anecdote to impress his correspondent



with the value of the most casual hints when presented to official persons capable of improving them. "At the commencement of the late war I happened," says he, "to be in company with some scientific men, who mentioned that the French had lately made important discoveries respecting the use of potash in the manufacture of gunpowder. Next day I dined with some merchants in the city, who accidentally stated that they did not know how to account for the fact, but that the French Government had bought up, at high prices, all the potash for sale in London; and that great quantities of the article were on board ship in the river, ready to be carried over into France. I immediately communicated the circumstance to Mr Pitt, and, to the astonishment of the public, an embargo on the exportation of potash was laid on next morning."

When M. Otto, in 1800, was sent over by the French Consul to negotiate a peace, Sir John received two communications from him; one relative to agriculture, and the other on the subject of a passport for visiting France.

"Londres, 6 Avril, 1800. Floreal, an 8 de la République Française, Le Commissaire de la République Française en Angleterre, à Sir John Sinclair, membre du Bureau d'Agriculture, à Londres.

"Monsieur,

"Il y a quelque temps que le C<sup>en</sup>. Niou, mon predecesseur, vous a fait passer une lettre du C<sup>en</sup>. Tessier,

Membre de l'Institut National, pour vous exprimer le désir de faire en Angleterre la collection des meilleurs ouvrages sur l'agriculture, et je presume qu'il vous a prié en même temps de vouloir bien lui indiquer les livres qui meritent l'attention particulière des savans. J'ai l'honneur de vous renouveler cette demande d'après l'ordre particulier que j'ai reçu de mon Gouvernement, qui pense que le domaine des sciences et des lettres n'a rien de commun avec les discussions politiques. Bien convaincu que vous partagez ce sentiment, je me flatte que vous voudrez bien designer les ouvrages Anglais qui vous paraîtront les plus propres à repandre les vrais principes de l'agriculture ; et je vous prie d'agréer d'avance mes remerciemens de la peine que vous prendrez. J'ai l'honneur d'être, avec une haute consideration,

“ Monsieur,

“ Votre très humble et obéissant serviteur,

“ OTTO.”\*

\* *Translation.*

London, April 1800.

Sir,

It is now some time since Citizen Nion, my predecessor, transmitted to you a letter from Citizen Tessier, Member of the National Institute, expressing a desire to have a collection made in England of the best works upon agriculture ; and, I presume, he requested of you, at the same time, to be so good as specify those books more especially deserving the attention of the learned. I have the honour to renew this request by the particular order of my Government, which is of opinion that the diffusion of science and literature has nothing in common

From M. Otto's second letter, it appears that Sir John had intended visiting Paris, an intention which, if he had not happily abandoned, he probably would have been compelled to remain for many years in France with the unfortunate *détenus*.

“ Portman Square, 26th April, 1802.

“ Sir,

“ In answer to your favour of yesterday, I have the honour to inform you that I shall, with the greatest pleasure, give you a passport to Paris, where you will be received with the distinction due to a man who has so successfully laboured to improve the state of human society. Believe me, with the highest regard, sir, your very faithful and obedient servant,

“ OTTO.”

Of the peace of Amiens Sir John and his political friends approved, as affording the best terms which Great Britain, considering the disordered state of her

with political discussions. Well convinced that you participate in this sentiment, I flatter myself that you will be pleased to name those English works which appear to you most suitable for disseminating the true principles of agriculture; and I beg you to accept before hand my thanks for the trouble this will give you. I have the honour to be, with much esteem, Sir, your very humble and obedient servant,

OTTO.

“ To Sir John Sinclair, }  
Member of the Board of }  
Agriculture, London.” }

finances, the immense increase of her debt, and the disasters of her allies, was entitled to expect.

Before concluding this chapter, it may be proper to introduce some notice of a very interesting correspondence which my father had carried on for some time with General Washington.

For that great and good man he had long cherished the profoundest admiration. He conceived that no individual, either in ancient or modern history, had stronger claims on the reverence of his cotemporaries, or on the gratitude of posterity. In the year 1792, Sir John addressed a letter to President Washington, enclosing papers on agricultural questions of common interest to Great Britain and the United States. The immediate and obliging answer of the President led to frequent communications from that period till his death in 1799. The most curious of Washington's letters (which amount in all to sixteen) is his reply, in December 1796, to Sir John's request that he would point out to him the most eligible situation for the residence of an emigrant in that country. The aspect of public affairs was at that time peculiarly gloomy, and my father conceived that the bold and injudicious measures of the Minister might lead to a national convulsion, and oblige him to seek an asylum in America. So friendly was the interest taken by Washington in the subject, that he wrote three copies of his reply with his own hand, one of which only (the third) was received. In this interest-

ing document, the writer gives an elaborate description of the various States composing the Union; details the different recommendations and disadvantages as well as prospects of each; the price of land, both in the northern and southern districts of the country; and concludes by giving the preference to his own immediate neighbourhood in Virginia. At the same time, it is pleasing to remark the influence of local attachments on the mind of the great republican of the New World. No English gentleman, whose patrimony had descended to him through a long line of ancestry, could be more partial to his hereditary domains than Washington was to his Virginian possessions. “To have such a tenant as Sir John Sinclair,” says he, “however desirable it might be, is an honour I dare not hope for; and to alienate any of the fee-simple estate of Mount Vernon, is a measure I am not inclined to.”

Other persons appear to have participated in the apprehension which led to this correspondence; and to have proposed, together with the Baronet, to seek refuge in America. Several letters are now beside me expressive of this sentiment; from them I select the following remarkable communication from Mr Lygon (afterwards Lord Beauchamp), M.P. for Worcester.

“ March, 1799.

“ Dear Sir John,

“ When I had last the pleasure of seeing you,

you mentioned that you once had a correspondence with General Washington, respecting an estate in America. I have turned my thoughts to the subject since, and if you feel no unwillingness to renew the correspondence with the General on my account, I shall think myself very much obliged to you; and before his answer arrives, you will be able to determine what part of the concern, or whether any, it will be agreeable to take on your own account. The sum I should think of investing in an estate there, will be about L.10,000; and if you should write, you will favour me by adding, it is for a friend of yours, who voted night and day, for seven years, on every occasion, against the claim of Great Britain to America. As it will be long before an answer can be received, may I request you, if at all, to write as soon as convenient. My friend Basil, who is much obliged to you for your civilities to him at Edinburgh, is now here (last from Ireland) brimful of gratitude and praise for the hospitalities of Scotland; the only country on earth where a soldier would wish to be quartered. I am, dear Sir John, your faithful servant,

“ WILLIAM LYGON.”

In addition to Washington, Sir John cultivated the friendship and correspondence of the most eminent individuals in America—the Presidents Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe; Mr Pinkney and Mr

Rush (American ministers in London) ; Gouverneur Morris, Mr Fulton the Engineer, Dr Logan, and Dr Edwards. President Adams invited my father to the United States :—" This," says he, " is the only rising country in the world, and it rises with a rapidity that outstrips all calculation. If you, Sir John" (he adds, with republican bluntness), " will do us the honour to come and see us, you will be treated with a cordial civility, *notwithstanding your title* ; and no man will be more happy to receive you than, sir, your most obedient servant,

" JOHN ADAMS.

" Philadelphia, 2d March, 1793."

Mr Adams appears to have been well aware that republican institutions could not easily be established in an old and densely peopled country. " Europe," says he, in a letter to my father, " discovers a disposition to try over again the old experiment of elective governments ; but they will find that giving them the name of representative governments, will not prevent them from having the same effect upon the emulation and ambition of the human heart, which they have ever had."

With Mr Jefferson Sir John became acquainted at Paris, when the former, in 1786, was ambassador to France. They met at the house of the Marquis de la Fayette, and afterwards became intimate in Eng-

land. The difference of sentiment with which Jefferson contemplated the French Revolution, at the two different periods of its commencement under a specious show of liberty, and after its close in a military despotism, is manifested by a comparison of two letters which he wrote, at an interval of twelve years, to my father. In 1791, he says, "We are now under the first impression of the news of the King's flight from Paris, and his recapture. It would be unfortunate, were it in the power of any one man, to defeat the issue of so beautiful a revolution. I hope and trust it is not, and that, for the good of suffering humanity all over the earth, that revolution will be established and spread through the whole world." His tone, in 1803, is very different; he seems to have anticipated the necessity of Great Britain renewing hostilities against Napoleon. "We are still uninformed here," he says, "whether you are again at war. Bonaparte has produced such a state of things in Europe, as it would seem difficult for him to relinquish in any sensible degree; and equally dangerous for Great Britain to suffer to go on; especially if accompanied by maritime preparations on his part. The events which have taken place in France have lessened, in the American mind, the motives of interest which it felt in that revolution; and its amity towards that country now rests on its love of peace and commerce. We see, at the same time, with great concern, the position in which Great Britain is placed; and should be



sincerely afflicted were any disaster to deprive mankind of the benefit of such a bulwark against the torrent, which has for some time been bearing down all before it. But her power and prowess at sea seem to render every thing safe in the end. Peace is our passion, and, though wrongs might drive us from it, we prefer trying every other just principle of right and safety before we would recur to war."

Among my father's American correspondents, there was none with whom he maintained a more frequent or more friendly intercourse than with Dr Edwards. In one of his earliest letters, the Doctor gives some curious hints as to an advantageous mode of provision for a growing family.\* "Also permit me," he says ("and ascribe it to the weakness of a friend, if I am eventually wrong), to advise you *once more* to make a provision (and very little now will do it) in our country for your descendants, not from a fear only of what may happen here, but because such property, judiciously vested in that country, rises in value beyond calculation or conception. I am not afraid of risking too much, when I tell you that a thousand pounds judiciously laid out in American lands for each of your sons on the day of his birth, may, and probably will be worth, to each of them by the day they arrive at twenty-one, not less than from ten to twenty thousand pounds—a monstrous advance this,

\* Falmouth, 5th August, 1794.

when you consider, that, did you put that sum to interest, it would only in the same time increase to two thousand pounds. A hint : Many gentlemen in exalted situations in this country are doing what I advise you to do. I have, on account of my being known to you, assisted two gentlemen to lay out L.25,000 in that way. They sought an introduction to me, and informed me afterwards that it was in consequence of their hearing I was acquainted with you ; but they requested I should not name them to you. So that you see, if it ends well, you will have done them good, though as yet they will not let you know it."

Among the Doctor's letters is a very interesting essay on the government of the United States, written at the request of his correspondent. After describing the original constitution, as well as the amended form of government in 1788, he concludes with a Transatlantic eulogium on the moderation with which a change of such magnitude had been effected. "When we reflect that government in general, under all its different modifications, has hitherto been the effect of force, fraud, or accident, it is a most gratifying circumstance, that the United States of America have produced the first instance, which the world has ever exhibited, of a constitution being maturely formed by the aggregate sense of a community, collected in a deliberative assembly ; and that afterwards, on a second and still more dispassionate, minute, and im-

partial consideration, another constitution should receive the full approbation and universal consent of that vast country ; composed of thirteen distinct and independent states, all varying essentially in their situations and dimensions, in the number and habits of their citizens, and, above all, in their respective interests and objects ; and that the people should accomplish all this without shedding a single drop of human blood, or causing a single riot ; without a tumultuous meeting, or the destruction of a particle of property, public or private—a proof this, that the government sanctioned by a majority of the citizens determined to support it, is as safe as it is just.”

## CHAPTER VI.

Improvements in Caithness—Geography—Backward and declining State—Advancing State—Roads—Tillage—Pastoral Economy—Manufactures—Trees—Villages and Towns—Fisheries—Testimonies.

As Caithness was the chief scene of Sir John Sinclair's personal experiments in agriculture and pastoral economy, and as no county throughout Great Britain has advanced so rapidly in industry, in population, and in agricultural resources, some account of that remote district may be curious and interesting to the reader. A fair comparison between the past and the present circumstances of Caithness, contrasting its backward and neglected state in former ages with its rapidly increasing prosperity and improvement during the last half century, forms a necessary tribute of justice both to the subject of these Memoirs, and to those enlightened and patriotic individuals who assisted him in effecting such valuable results.

Caithness, or the peninsula of the Catti, a tribe much celebrated by Tacitus in his Account of Germany,\* is the most northerly county on the mainland

\* “*Duriora genti corpora stricti artus minax vultus et major animi vigor.*”—TAC. *Ger.* cap. xxx.

of Great Britain. It reaches to  $58^{\circ} 42'$  of northern latitude, and exemplifies, during the summer solstice, the remark of Juvenal on the

“*Minimâ contentos nocte Britannos.*”

Its form is an irregular triangle, measuring from north to south about thirty-five miles, and from east to west twenty-two, containing 616 square miles. The coast is in general precipitous, but the country is flat, except towards the southern extremity, where it rises into considerable mountains. From its peninsular situation, the climate is moist, and the land subject to heavy rains and sudden floods, which sometimes sweep away the produce of the farmer.\* When my father succeeded to his estate, three-fourths of the county consisted of deep peat-moss, and of high hills covered with heath, or altogether naked. There was also some extent of drifting sand along the shores. The arable districts, however, composed of clay or loam, although not extensive, were capable of bearing large crops, and not only supplied the wants of a

\* Among the inhabitants, even events of public importance are often dated before or after great “speats,” or floods. This was, in particular, the mode of computation employed by my father’s worthy old factor, Mr Davidson, who, according to Scotch fashion, was called “*Buckies*,” from the name of his farm. Discarding customary epochs, such as the Accession, the American War, or the Revolution in France, Buckies calculated events from “the great speat” in 1784 or 1796.

scanty population, but afforded them a surplus to be exported.\*

During those past ages in which Caithness has been occasionally noticed by the historian and topographer, its agricultural condition appears to have been frightfully miserable and unpromising. The spirit of improvement, which was elsewhere making slow but gradual advances, had not reached this remote and neglected region. Bleau, in his *Atlas*, published about two centuries ago,† after enumerating, and perhaps exaggerating, the natural capabilities of Caithness, condemns in strong terms the indolence which overlooked them. “This county,” he says, “is not without many convenient situations for building towns, also very large, safe, and capacious harbours, seas abounding with all sorts of fish, a fertile soil, well adapted both for corn and cattle, and rivers fit for navigation; but the sluggishness of the people neglects all these advantages.” He goes on to describe how the inhabitants continued to vegetate on the same spot all their days, neither visiting foreigners in the way of traffic, nor visited by them.‡

\* “The great thinness of the inhabitants enables them to send abroad much of their productions.”—PENNANT’S *Tour*, vol. iii. p. 201.

† See Chap. VII.

‡ Non desunt certe multis locis urbium locandarum opportunitates, portus maximi tutissimi, capacissimi, maria omni generis piscibus plena, terra fœcunda, et messibus ac pecori apta, ac flumina vecturæ idonea; ac his omnibus ignavia parcet, ac in-

This description long continued applicable to the county. From the Report of the Committee on British Fisheries, in 1785, it appears that, during the seventeen years previous to that period, Caithness, in common with the other five northern counties, had been retrograding rather than advancing.”\*

The spectacle at that time presented to his eye, both by his own property and by that of his neighbours, was to the last degree discouraging. So enlarged were his views of agricultural improvement, that he was not entirely pleased even with the condition of the most advanced districts in the South, and there was therefore little for him to contemplate with satisfaction in this sequestered northern region. In a paper, dated 1771, when he was only seventeen, he says, “There is not a county in Scotland more improvable by nature, and less indebted to art, than Caithness.”

At this time, the whole north of Scotland beyond

*colæ ut plurimum pecore victitantes dominati ibidem aluntur senescuntque ; unde ora hæc exteris omnibus imo nostris minus cognita, a paucis videtur aut commerciis exercetur. Non sum nescius non nullos huic moli pares locandis urbibus animos appulisse, at cum jura, libertates, urbibus solitæ (sine quibus illæ stare non possunt) paterentur, quanquam sanctiones in id promulgatæ invitarent votorum impotes eam curam abjecisse.*

\* In this Report (p. 405), a minute calculation is made, that, notwithstanding the imposition of many new taxes, the excise revenue, from the six northern counties, had fallen off from

$\frac{93}{100}$  of a penny per head, to  $\frac{72}{100}$ .

Inverness was almost inaccessible. Even the main road along the coast was miserably defective, both in its materials and in its line of direction. It was often needlessly carried over steep hills; it was in many places narrow, and almost every where broken and uneven. Through the greater part of Sutherland, it was a mere track along the shore among rocks and sand, sometimes covered with the tide, and throughout its whole extent interrupted, not merely by dangerous ferries over arms of the sea, but by difficult and sometimes impracticable fords. So imperfect a line of communication was the clearest evidence of a scanty traffic and an indolent population. In Caithness, the ill-defined pathways, by which intercourse was kept up between different places, could hardly be dignified with the name of roads. The chief approach from the south, over a mountain called the Ord, was so difficult and dangerous, that when the coach or chaise of a proprietor was to cross, fifteen or twenty persons were employed to assist the horses. A great laird might have a larger number.\* The late Earl of Caithness on one occasion called out an array of between forty and fifty men. Though the few gentlemen in some cases possessed carriages, there was scarcely a farmer in the whole county who owned a wheel cart. Burdens were usually conveyed, sometimes on the backs of ponies, of which large herds pastured

\* Pennant's Tour may be consulted on this point, and Henderson's Caithness.—*App.* 9.



at large over the open heaths, and sometimes thirty or forty females might be seen in a line, carrying heavy burdens on their shoulders in large wicker baskets, or *creels*, under the superintendence of the grieve or manager. With the exception of a few large farms, annexed to mansion houses (or *mains*, as they were termed), the lands were in general occupied by small farmers, holding their tenements in what was called *rig* and *rennal*—that is, intermixed with one another. Beyond the outer fence of this kind of motley farm, there was nothing but an undivided waste in which the neighbouring proprietors had a joint interest. Where a field was fertile, every tenant insisted on having one or more ridges. By this strange arrangement some farmers had their lands a quarter or even half a mile distant from their houses, while the ground nearest them was frequently occupied by their neighbours. Thence arose, as might be expected, perpetual animosity.

About one-half the rent was paid in money, the rest partly in kind, and partly in the most burdensome and discouraging services. The tenants were obliged to cultivate a certain portion of land in the occupancy of their landlord, to secure his crop in the granary, and to dispose of it at market for his benefit; they were also required to furnish peats for fuel, bags for corn, and hay-ropes for agricultural purposes; to keep a certain number of cattle for his use during winter, when fodder was scarce, and to pay a tithe

of lamb and wool. The women, also, were sometimes required to supply a portion of their linen and woollen yarn for the use of the proprietor's lady.\* There were no considerable towns in Caithness to afford a market for the sale of commodities. The only two clusters of houses in the whole county were Thurso, once a place of greater note, but then a small fishing village, and Wick, which contained a few hundred inhabitants. Notwithstanding Bleau's assertion to the contrary, not a single harbour existed on the coast, nor indeed any shelter for shipping, except the open roadstead of Scrabster, and during certain winds, that of Sinclair's Bay.

The inhabitants did not attempt to compensate for the poverty of their soil by the fecundity of the adjacent seas. A small number only of herrings were caught, and these clumsily and imperfectly cured. The domestic breeds of sheep and cattle, for which, owing to the wretched state of tillage, no adequate provision could be made in winter, would naturally degenerate rather than improve. The sarcasms of Dr Johnson, on the paucity of trees in Scotland, however inapplicable to other parts of the kingdom, were altogether true of Caithness. I have now before me a folio leaf of ancient MS., containing an exact list of probably all the trees in the county. This strange document (dated 1710), which would have so rejoiced the heart of the great lexicographer, was

\* Brewster's Encyclopædia.—Article Caithness.

drawn up at Brawl Castle by the sheriff-depute, is subscribed by the minister, and countersigned by several proprietors, as well as gardeners, convened for that especial purpose. The report, thus formally and judicially attested, purports to be for the information of the Lord-Lieutenant of the county, the Earl of Breadalbane. The inventory divides the trees into barren and fruitful; and in enumerating the latter, even currant bushes are not omitted. From other minute authorities we learn the very curious process by which these rare specimens of timber had been made to grow in the fields allotted for the experiment, which we are assured are among the most favourable in the county for horticultural purposes. As the subsoil consisted of slaty rock, or till, it was necessary to dig for each tree a hole of large dimensions, over which the tenants of the neighbouring town-lands were obliged annually, for seven years, to heap a mound of compost.

The patrimony of Sir John Sinclair occupied about a sixth part of the county, and consisted of about 60,000 acres.\* The rent of this extensive territory amounted only to L.2300 a-year, encumbered at the same time with a debt of L.18,000, and an annuity of L.500.

Before I describe the measures taken by my father to remedy the evils and to overcome the difficulties

\* A much higher estimate is given in Henderson's *Caithness*. —See Appendix, p. 35.

above enumerated, it may be right to remark, that the nature of my work confines me to his own individual exertions. The efforts made by others do not fall within the province of his biographer. I should otherwise have enlarged with pleasure on the meritorious activity of the late Lord-Lieutenant (the Earl of Caithness), and of Mr Traill, who long held the office of sheriff, and who is now probably the ablest practical agriculturist in the North. No man did justice more readily to his various fellow-labourers in the improvement of the county than Sir John Sinclair, and no man could more abundantly afford to do so, as their efforts were the result of a public spirit, which he had himself contributed so largely to call forth.

The Baronet of Ulbster's first attempt to improve the county was made at a very early period, when, as already mentioned, he called out 1200 workmen, and to the astonishment of the people, made a road over the hill of Ben Cheilt in a single day. Some time after he made a second levy for a similar purpose, and continued his road for three miles through a deep bog called the Causeway Mire, from the circumstance that Cromwell, during his Protectorship, had ordered a kind of mound or causeway to be formed across it. These roads, although useful at the time, and valuable as incitements to industry, could not be durable, as they were not formed regularly with metal. It appears by a letter from Sir John to Lady Janet, dated 24th August, 1784, that at that early period he

had succeeded in drawing the attention of the Government to the improvement of communications through the north. "I have assurance," he says, "from both" (Pitt and Dundas) "that our roads are to be attended to next spring, and I enclose a letter from Dundas upon the subject. The bridges there can be no doubt of, but they rather grumble about assisting the roads."

Anticipating, even at this early period, the vast ameliorations since effected throughout the whole north of Scotland, my father was often heard to declare, that he hoped to see the day when a mail-coach would arrive at Thurso. This achievement, notwithstanding his success in the case of Ben Cheilt, was regarded as the visionary idea of a sanguine mind. His incredulous auditors, contemplating the numerous impediments to the progress of the vehicle through Ross-shire and Sutherland, as well as Caithness, from rivers, from arms of the sea, from mountains and morasses, used the arrival of a mail at Thurso as a by-word to express any physical impossibility. "Such a thing," they said, "will happen when Sir John's mail reaches Thurso." The mail has now been arriving daily at Thurso for many years.

The obstacles to the construction of roads through the northern counties were not likely to be surmounted at the outset without extraneous aid; and Sir John, in considering how a fund could be provided for his purpose, conceived that the balances of the

forfeited estates in Scotland were the most available resource. In 1801, therefore, he moved the House of Commons for a select committee to consider how these balances should be appropriated. Of this committee he was appointed chairman; his plan was adopted, and the result was in the highest degree beneficial, chiefly owing to a rule which he suggested, that no money should be granted to any individual or corporation, unless the claimant advanced a sum equal to that afforded by Parliament. The only exception was an unconditional grant of eight thousand five hundred pounds to the British Fishing Society, for the construction of a harbour at Wick, on the ground of an outlay already made by that body of large sums for public works.

A few years afterwards, Sir John had some communication with the Right Hon. William Dundas (a relative of Lord Melville), as to the origin of these northern improvements.

The following laconic note accompanied a paper from that gentleman, giving a slight historical sketch of these transactions:—

“ Bath, Saturday.

“ My dear Sir,

“ In a rainy morning I have hastily written the facts as they were. ‘The plan originated with you,’ and on every proper occasion I will declare it.

“ Yours faithfully,

“ W. DUNDAS.”

The paper alluded to in the preceding note is as follows :—“ It has been said, and warmly asserted, that the interests of Scotland were little attended to; and the example of Ireland has been adduced to show how much more active were the Irish to promote its welfare, and how much more liberal Parliament had been found by the large supplies voted for that country. Now it will appear that Scotland has not of late years been put under the ban of the empire, nor have the Scotch Members been inattentive to their country, nor has Parliament withheld the means necessary for its improvement.

“ A few years ago the northern counties were inaccessible; true, indeed, the droves of cattle passed, and the drivers could climb the hills with their cattle, and swim the river with them when it barred their way. This was the case previous to 1801. About that time Sir John Sinclair proposed to the late Lord Melville to apply to Parliament to appropriate L.50,000, arising from the forfeited estates, to the useful purpose of opening these northern counties, which had hitherto been shut out from improvement, and might have remained for ever barricadoed by the hand of nature, and debarred of that free communication, without which it was evident no material alteration of their state could be attempted. The administration of Pitt closed in 1801, and Lord Melville retired with him from public employment. The papers relative to Scotland were put into the

hands of Mr W. Dundas, who, in 1802, gave notice in his place that he should move to apply L.50,000 to this national object. Mr Vansittart, Secretary of the Treasury, requested Mr Dundas to withdraw the motion, and brought in a bill in the following year, appointing Commissioners, the Speaker, Mr Dundas, and others, with powers to advance, on the part of the public, one half of any estimate for roads or bridges, the proprietors of the district becoming bound to furnish their moiety. In 1816, L.200,000 had been paid by the public, and it is needless to say most splendidly beneficial have been the effects of this salutary measure. For the Caledonian Canal above L.600,000 have been advanced by Parliament, and if nothing else were attained than teaching the habits of labour and exertion to men who, before this period, never dreamed of handling a pick or a spade, but basked in the sun in summer, and huddled together in their smoky huts in winter, poor, lazy, and idle, the country has gained much by accustoming the hardy inhabitants to know their own powers, and to ameliorate, by the profits of labour, their hitherto scanty and limited means of comfort and existence.

“ The Forth and Clyde, the Crinan Canal, lately the College of Edinburgh, and the Glasgow road to Carlisle, prove incontestably that Scotland has not been neglected by those whose duty it was to attend to her interests, nor has Parliament been slow to stretch forth a liberal hand to enable the proprietors



to undertake those beneficial operations which no private contribution could alone supply, and which has, in a few years, done more than centuries preceding the present period had accomplished."

As the first step towards a general change in the system of tillage, Sir John formed a number of large farms, which, in many instances, he enclosed and reduced to order at his own expense. To prevent that unhappy depopulation, frequently resulting from such improvements, he also formed throughout considerable tracts minute divisions, of which he granted leases for twenty-one years, at an easy rent. He built comfortable farm-houses, and added to them substantial offices, placed in central and advantageous situations. He abolished totally the *rig and rennal* system over his estates, and dispensed, at the same time, with every kind of feudal service.\* He provided mills, and obliged his tenants to adopt a regular rotation of crops, till they should learn the advantages of the method by experience. He assisted them in procuring proper seeds, especially clover, rye-grass, and turnip. He prohibited the sale of peat or turf, and encouraged the use of coal for fuel. He estab-

\* "I was much pleased with the intention expressed in the plan you communicated to me of a total abolition of all predial and personal services, which prevail, as I have heard, to a degree in Caithness that amounts to little less than servitude—ten thousand times more prejudicial to the proprietor than to the tenant."—*Letter from George Dempster, Esq. M.P. Sept. 1793.*

lished a mode of obtaining lime and marl at a cheap rate for the improvement of the soil. He distributed premiums to encourage industry. Holding in high esteem the husbandry of Morayshire, he laid the ablest farmers of that province under contribution for hints and suggestions applicable to Caithness. He made similar enquiries among his own neighbours, and circulated the result in tracts and papers among his tenantry. The effect of these energetic measures was remarkable. In 1812 the quantity of land improved by himself or his tenants amounted to 11,209 English acres; and the latter had the candour to confess that they had always been amply remunerated wherever they had vigorously followed out the plan prescribed for them.\* His own experimental farm of Thurso showed, in some degree, what might be done amidst the difficulties of a hyperborean climate. Mr Wright, in his *Husbandry of North Britain*, mentions that the richest second crop of clover he had any where seen was on a field cultivated by Sir John Sinclair.

To render productive the vast moors which occupied so large a portion of the county, Sir John procured at one time from Cambridgeshire, and at another from Westmoreland, persons skilled in fen-husbandry to try experiments of paring and burning. The measure promised at first every success; but owing to the thinness of the soil, and the expensiveness of lime, the land soon returned almost to its

\* See Henderson's *Caithness*, Appendix, p. 61.

original sterility. This experiment, with one or two others, may be considered as having in some degree failed. Such experiments, however, even where they fail entirely, are not without utility. They often suggest plans which ultimately succeed ; and, at all events, they set questions at rest as to the actual capabilities of the soil and climate.

It was in Caithness that my father first manifested that antipathy to waste lands, which so long characterised his exertions as President of the Board of Agriculture. Among his favourite toasts was, “ May a common become an uncommon spectacle in Caithness.” Though he could not procure a general enclosure bill for the whole kingdom, this wish of his heart was fully gratified at home ; for there is now scarcely a single undivided district in the county.

Besides these improvements in tillage, our agricultural Baronet directed his attention to pasturage, and introduced, upon the hilly part of his estate, that valuable breed, “ the long hill sheep of the east Border ;” to which, as I elsewhere observed, he gave the name of *Cheviot*. Knowing that if he tried the experiment upon a small scale, and trusted to the care of inexperienced Highlanders, the sheep would inevitably perish from mismanagement or neglect, he sent north a flock of five hundred at once, under the care of shepherds from the Borders. As even the native breeds had always hitherto been housed during the winter months among the mountains of Caithness,

his neighbours all expected that his plan would be an utter failure, and that a small remnant only of the flock would survive till spring. To their astonishment, however, and to his own satisfaction, it was ascertained that these southern strangers continued in a thriving state, and that their wool did not deteriorate in the north. So profitable was this experiment, that the estate of Langwell, which he purchased for L.8000, was subsequently sold for L.40,000. To improve the black cattle, which was among the worst breeds in Scotland, he ordered some good specimens of bulls from the isle of Skye, and disposed of them to his neighbours at prime cost.

With the view of introducing manufactures into a remote district where capital was wanting, Sir John raised a subscription among the landed proprietors and middling classes of his neighbourhood, and assisted individuals of approved skill out of manufacturing districts, to establish at Thurso and Wick the branches of industry best adapted to the circumstances of the county. In this subscription he led the way, and his donation trebled that of any other contributor. Several valuable manufactories were thus introduced, although not followed up with sufficient vigour afterwards. My father's usual disinterestedness was manifested on this occasion. Among other establishments originating in these subscriptions, a tannery and a bleachfield were set up. He had large shares in both ; but, as Henderson informs us, when the former

manufactory succeeded and the latter failed, " Sir John, from the most patriotic motives, gave up his shares in the tannery, and took the whole shares of the bleachfield to himself." \*

In his attempts to raise timber, the difficulties arising from a thin soil, and from exposure to the sea blast, could be only partially surmounted. Sir John, however, established, near the river Thurso, a nursery for trees ; and also planted, in three years, on the mountains bordering on Sutherland, no less than 345,000, which are now in a thriving state.† Experiments on a small scale were made by other proprietors, several of whose mansion-houses are now partially surrounded with plantations, which are rather stunted perhaps in growth, but yet in some degree ornamental.

To remedy the disadvantages of a scattered population, Sir John, on his own property, founded two villages, and commenced a new town at Thurso, on a plan combining ornament with convenience. But his principal effort in this way, was the establishment of a new fishing station near Wick, at a distance from his own estate, under the auspices of the Society for the improvement of the British Fisheries.

\* Henderson's Caithness, p. 248.

† See Henderson's Caithness, Appendix, p. 63. My father's overseers were less zealous in this than in any other improvement which he attempted. They considered trees any where, but in mountainous districts, as a waste of ground, and heedlessly suffered them to be either choked with weeds, or trodden under foot by cattle.

This valuable institution was erected by act of Parliament in 1786. Its capital arose from subscriptions by patriotic individuals, who had no expectation of ever receiving a dividend, but were anxious to extend that important branch of national industry on the northern and western coasts of Scotland. Sir John Sinclair from the first took a great interest in the proceedings of the society, and was indefatigable in obtaining new members and subscribers.

The fishery in Caithness, towards the close of the last century, was very trifling, and is thus described by Pennant, in his "Tour," in 1769 :—" At a little distance from Sinclair's Castle, near Staxigo Creek, is a small herring-fishery, the only one on the coast ; cod and other fish abound there ; but the want of ports on this stormy coast is an obstacle to the establishment of fisheries on this side of the county." To remedy the evils here described, my father adopted, for a succession of years, a variety of energetic measures. So early as 1785, he took a part in the labours of a Parliamentary committee on the British fisheries, and transmitted to that body a valuable paper, published in the appendix to their third Report. In 1787, he prevailed upon a company from Dunbar to re-establish cod-fishing on the coast of Caithness, after it had been neglected for several years. He next furnished certain enterprising individuals with capital to carry on the herring-fishery on the eastern coast.\* In 1789, he submitted to the Directors of the British

\* Henderson's Caithness, Appendix, p. 64.

Fishing Society a memorial, urging the erection of a harbour at Wick, and the establishment of a fishing station in that neighbourhood. The engineers, Mr Rennie and Mr Telford, reported favourably of the plan, which it was considered would be not only useful to the fisheries, but of great national importance ; since, within a short period, not less than thirty vessels had been wrecked upon the coast, chiefly for want of shelter.\* After several years, Sir John, with much difficulty, prevailed upon the society to carry his project into execution. A fishing settlement on a large scale was at last established near Wick, and a harbour erected at the expense of L.12,000, of which, as I have already mentioned, L.8500 was, at his suggestion, granted from the balances of the forfeited estates. The new station was called Pulteney Town, in compliment to Sir William Pulteney, the governor of the society ; and has since become the most valuable of its establishments. Some persons have even gone so far as to say, “ But for Pulteney Town the society would have become bankrupt.” In 1810, when his friend Mr Percival was Prime Minister, Sir John Sinclair, in concert with the Right Honourable G. Rose, persuaded Government to institute a board for the express purpose of superintending and encouraging the fisheries. In consequence of the judicious regulations adopted and enforced by this body, herrings cured by British

\* Henderson's *Caithness*, p. 365. Also *Minutes of the British Fishing Society*.

fishermen gradually acquired, and still maintain, the highest reputation in all foreign markets. To this happy result, Sir John further contributed by inducing Ministers to send, at the public expense, Dutch fishermen to Caithness for the instruction of the natives, hitherto unskilful in the art of taking and curing herrings. The result of these various measures is, that, on the coast of Caithness alone, in the year 1829-30, above 13,000 individuals were employed in this department of industry, and above 150,000 barrels of herrings cured.\* The description of Wick by Messrs Anderson, in their "Tour" (1834), forms a striking contrast to that of Penant, in the preceding century. "No sight," say these accomplished travellers, "can be more beautiful than the look-out on a fine summer morning from the seaward cliffs near the town, on the surface of the ocean, bespangled with perhaps from five hundred to a thousand herring-boats, either sailing in lines to or from their stations, or busied hauling in their nets, or rowing round them to guard and watch the indications of their buoys. Large vessels, gli-

\* Caithness includes three entire fishing districts—Wick, Thurso, and Latheron, besides part of Helmsdale. In 1829-30, 6285 persons were employed at Wick; at Thurso, 1094; at Latheron, 1875; and at Helmsdale, 1654. To these must be added seamen on board of coasting vessels, who are not included in the returns. In 1828, these last were reckoned by the inspector at 3500. At Wick, there were cured 112,698 barrels; at Thurso, 1701; at Latheron, 18,700; and at Helmsdale, 19,857. The whole fishery in that year employed 80,300 persons, and produced 181,654 barrels for exportation.



ding in among this small craft, seem like stately swans surrounded by a flock of lively sea-gulls; and here and there the broad pennon of a revenue cruiser, and the swift light rowing-boats of the preventive service, remind us that no small degree of caution and order is required to be maintained among the numerous little objects dancing on the waves before us, like the motes in a sunbeam.”\* The fishery has since been extended with the same success to the neighbouring counties, and is undoubtedly now the most productive in Europe.

By all classes throughout Caithness the utility of my father's exertions was not only appreciated but acknowledged with the warmest gratitude. The freeholders, in 1806, voted him their thanks for having carried through so many measures, which, to use their own words, “laid a solid foundation for the future prosperity of the county.” The magistrates of the royal burgh of Wick concurred in a unanimous resolution, that “he was eminently entitled to the thanks of the corporation and inhabitants of the burgh, for his uniform and liberal attention to their interests, and for his obliging conduct on all occasions to every individual connected with the town;” and, in particular, they thanked him for “first turning the attention of the British Fishing Society to the place, and for his zeal in promoting the establishment of the harbour at Pulteney, which had so greatly tended to the prosperity of Wick and its vicinity.” In like

\* P. 516.

manner the inhabitants of Thurso, the only other town in the county, at a public meeting in 1800, unanimously voted him an address, acknowledging with gratitude that, “ amidst other pursuits of a more extensive tendency, the improvement of his native county had been the peculiar object of his care.” They refer to different branches of manufactures which, “ through the spirit of industry inspired by his means,” had been introduced successfully amongst them. An association, entitled, “ The Farmers and Craftsmen of Thurso,” formed in 1809, made it their first act, unanimously, to vote Sir John Sinclair an honorary member, and to render him their “ warmest thanks, in the name of the community at large, for the services he had rendered them at all times, and more particularly during a recent scarcity.”

Nor was it merely by such expressions of good feeling that the proprietors and inhabitants of Caithness rewarded their benefactor. They did more; they cheerfully co-operated with him in his plans of usefulness. They followed his example on their own estates. Their industry and public spirit contrasted nobly with the supineness of their ancestors. New villages, new farms, new harbours, are springing up in every direction. The whole body of inhabitants are in full employment; and it appears, from a comparison of the last but one, with the preceding census, that no county in Great Britain, during the intervening ten years, had increased so rapidly as Caithness in population.

*A General View of the Proportionate increased Rate of Population in the following 86\* Counties or Districts in ENGLAND, WALES, and SCOTLAND ; comparing the " Enumeration " of 1821 with that of 1811.† Drawn up (from the Returns made to Parliament) by JAMES CLELAND, Esq. of Glasgow.— June, 1823.*

Counties.	Increase per cent from 1811 to 1821.	Counties.	Increase per cent from 1811 to 1821.
Sutherland ‡.....	$\frac{0}{10}$	Hereford.....10	8
Peebles.....	1	Radnor.....	8
Perth.....	2	Roxburgh.....	8
Forfar.....	4	Claekmannan.....	9
Kincairdine.....5	5	Merioneth.....	9
Salop.....	5	Elgin.....15	9
Kinross.....	6	Berks.....	10
Berwick.....	7	Westmoreland.....	10
Nairn.....	8	York, North Riding.....	10

\* There are properly eighty-seven counties in Great Britain, forty-two in England (calculating each of the three Ridings in Yorkshire as a separate district or county), twelve in Wales, and thirty-three in Scotland ; but the counties of Ross and Cromarty are so thoroughly intermingled, that it was found impossible to distinguish the population of each.

† In several counties, the augmentation is to be ascribed to the increased population of the principal towns, by persons flocking into them from the country, or from foreign parts. Thus, the increase of Mid-Lothian, is that of EDINBURGH ; of Lanarkshire, that of GLASGOW ; of Lancashire, that of MANCHESTER and LIVERPOOL ; of Surrey, that of SOUTHWARK ; of Middlesex, that of LONDON, &c.

Augmented population in the country districts (an object in every point of view so peculiarly desirable) can hardly take place but in consequence of an increased cultivation of waste lands, which, on that account, ought, as much as possible, to be promoted.

‡ In no district in the kingdom have greater agricultural improvements been made than in Sutherland ; but it would appear that its population, between 1811 and 1821, has only increased to the amount of 211 souls. A foundation, however, has been laid for a great increase *in future*, by the building of villages, the establishment of a herring-fishery, and the cultivation of extensive tracts of waste land.

Counties.	Increase per cent from 1811 to 1821.	Counties.	Increase per cent from 1811 to 1821.
Stirling.....	11	Leicester.....	15
Dumbarton.....20	11	Cumberland.....	15
Dumfries.....	11	Cardarthen.....	15
Haddington.....	11	Durham.....	15
Rutland.....	11	Linlithgow.....60	15
Selkirk.....	11	Carnarvon.....	16
Argyle.....25	12	Somerset.....	16
Fife.....	12	Gloucester.....	16
Ross and Cromarty.....	12	Norfolk.....	16
York, East Riding.....	13	Banff.....65	17
Oxford.....	13	Chester.....	17
Buckingham.....30	13	Cornwall.....	17
Cardigan.....	13	Lincoln.....	17
Kent.....	13	Bedford.....	18
Bute.....	13	Denbigh.....70	18
Derby.....	13	Glamorgan.....	18
Devon.....35	13	Warwick.....	18
Essex.....	13	Middlesex.....	19
Northampton.....	13	Cambridge.....	19
Nottingham.....	13	Renfrew.....75	19
Wilts.....	13	Anglesey.....	20
Worcester.....40	13	Pembroke.....	20
Monmouth.....	13	Ayr.....	21
Aberdeen.....	14	Sussex.....	21
Inverness.....	14	York, West Riding, 80	21
Kirkeudbright.....	14	Surrey.....	22
Montgomery.....45	14	Wigton.....	22
Orkney and Shetland..	14	Lancaster.....	25
Hampshire.....	14	Lanark.....	26
Brecon.....	14	Edinburgh.....	28
Dorset.....	14	Caithness*.....86	29
Flint.....50	14		
Huntingdon.....	14		
Northumberland.....	14	<i>The two latter Counties</i>	
Stafford.....	14	<i>with Decimals.</i>	
Suffolk.....	14	Edinburgh....28·87,279	
Hertford.....55	15	Caithness.....29·11,738	

† It is perhaps the most extraordinary circumstance recorded in the history of "POLITICAL ECONOMY," that the remotest and most north-

A copy of the annexed table was transmitted by the French Consul in Scotland, the Chevalier Masclet, to the Minister for Foreign Affairs at Paris, with a long letter explaining the most remarkable results. This intelligent observer dwells with much astonishment on the rapid progress of Caithness. "On se demande," he says, "avec surprise ce qui a pu faire que le comté de Caithness, placé tout à l'extrémité septentrionale de l'Ecosse et en vue des Isles Orcades, ait, d'un recensement à l'autre, surpassé en population les 85 autres comtés de la Grande Bre-

erly county in Great Britain should, on an accurate comparison between the two last "ENUMERATIONS," surpass all the other eighty-five districts of the kingdom in regard to that great criterion of national prosperity (when it is properly regulated and employed),—"INCREASED POPULATION." It is indeed hardly to be credited that such a circumstance could have taken place, if it were not proved, beyond the possibility of doubt, by the most authentic documents. It proves what would have been the prosperous state of the other districts in Great Britain, had the same zeal for improvement, by which this remote county was actuated, been extended with equal judgment over the other districts of the kingdom. This increased population is certainly much owing to the establishment of a valuable herring-fishery, to the erection of villages for carrying it on, and to the number of persons employed in it. But the improvement of agriculture, and the cultivation of waste lands, have gone on progressively with the extension of the fisheries; and hence it is, that notwithstanding the great addition to the population of Caithness, there has been no occasion for importing any grain from other districts at home, and far less from foreign countries.

The formation of roads, accompanied by the establishment of a mail coach to Thurso, have likewise greatly contributed to the prosperity of the county; and what merits particular attention is this, that the whole has been effected, more by means of zeal, industry, and skill, than by the expenditure of great capital. It is proper, also, to observe, that the inhabitants of this county are in general actively and usefully employed; and that "Caithness" has suffered less during the late distresses of agriculture, than almost any district in the kingdom, similarly circumstanced.

tagne.” After enumerating the various measures by which the industry and resources of the county had been called forth, the Chevalier proceeds :—  
“ Toutes ces améliorations sont dues au zèle et au patriotisme éclairé du principal propriétaire de ce comté, à Sir John Sinclair, qui, voulant joindre l'exemple au précept, apres un essai en grand fait sur sa propriété, a réalisé en partie, ce qu'enseignent et promettent ses nombreux écrits, au milieu d'une population qu'il avoit trouvé pauvre et stationnaire sur un sol en friche, et sur une côte orageuse, où l'on n'avait recueilli jusqu'alors que des débris de naufrage.”

The following letters from the President of the Royal Society, from Mr Culley, the most eminent agriculturist and breeder in England, and from Bishop Watson, will be interesting in connexion with the subject now concluded :—

“ Soho Square, April 4, 1802.

“ My dear Sir John,

“ I thank you for your plan for improving your hyperborean property ; it is judiciously and ably drawn, and will, I have no doubt, produce effects useful to the public, as well as to individuals. I really think that every member of the Board, who has enlarged ideas, would be obliged to you for the perusal of it. I am sure it has gratified me very much.

“ I am sorry we had not your company yesterday,

as your idea of erecting a statue to the Duke in Russell Square was unanimously adopted, and a subscription entered into by way of beginning, to which, when the thirteenth accedes, as I have no doubt he will, one having left us, it will, I think, amount to 400 guineas.

“ Very faithfully yours,

“ JOSEPH BANKS.”

“ Eastfield, 23d January, 1804.

“ Sir John Sinclair,

“ Please to accept my grateful thanks for transmitting to me the account of the wonderful and extensive improvements carrying on in the remote county of Caithness. It only shows and proves what attention and perseverance will do! I have not forgot that you once said, ‘that you never undertook any thing but you were determined to go through with it.’

“ It was so far back as the year 1774, I think, or 75, that I visited Caithness, and much pleasure would it give me to again visit that promontory where such beneficial improvements, and upon so very extensive a scale, the distant district considered, are carrying on under your auspices. But I am too old in life to undertake so distant a journey.

“ I am much obliged by your kind enquiries after my health, which, I thank God, is beyond my expectations on the verge of 70. That you may live long to see, and continue to promote, the improvement of

your own native land, as well as of the whole empire, is the real wish of, Sir John, your much obliged and grateful humble servant,

“ GEO. CULLEY.”

“ Calgarth Park, 10th Nov. 1802.

“ My dear Sir John,

“ I received the statement of your improvements, &c. and I now write merely to express to you my high approbation of what you are doing. You are securing opulence to your family, honour to yourself, and advantage to the country. Go on and prosper.

“ Yours most truly,

“ R. LLANDAFF.”

END OF VOLUME FIRST.











